

Editorial

SARAH HALE
PETER WATTS
DOUG INGRAM
ANNA BARNEY

Issue 7 of the *Journal of the Foundation Year Network* is published at an increasingly challenging time for the higher education sector, and a profoundly difficult one for foundation years in particular.

The effective defunding of foundation years, through the imposition of FE level fees across a range of important subject areas, which was threatened ever since the publication of the Augar Report some six years ago, has now been enacted, and will take effect from next academic year.

The supreme irony of course is that the rationale for this – that many foundation years do not represent good value for either students or the government – was based upon data including the large scale franchising of provision, which has now come under increasing, and well-deserved, scrutiny in its own right. Foundation years have been attacked as a scapegoat for the exploitation, by unethical and even fraudulent ‘providers’, of a profit-based marketplace in HE that was deliberately introduced by the Conservative government in 2017.

If only the newly-elected Labour government had moved to address the issues of fraud and profiteering in the franchised sector first, the high quality, transformative foundation years that the Foundation Year Network was founded to represent and promote, could have been left unharmed to continue doing their outstanding and cost-effective work. As it stands, the fees cut will inflict its greatest damage upon this provision, leaving unscrupulous franchisers to wring their profit from the lower fees at even greater cost to vulnerable students.

As always, this issue of the *Journal* showcases the positives: what foundation years do and how they do it, and how we as foundation year practitioners reflect on and contextualise our practice.

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We begin with two clear and evidenced examples of the good that foundation years do, in improving student outcomes and transforming students' experiences of higher education. The next four articles display the innovations in teaching, assessment and curriculum design that flourish in foundation years, showcasing some of the ways in which their positive impact is achieved – and along the way illustrating the commitment to scrutiny and improvement typical of foundation year practitioners. The final two articles step back to take a broader reflective view of aspects of foundation years and their personal, theoretical and historical contexts.

The *Journal of the Foundation Year Network* was established in 2018 under the editorship of Doug Ingram, Peter Watts and Sarah Hale. Of the three of us, it was Doug who was the inspiration and the driving force, without whom we would not have achieved one issue, let alone seven and counting. Doug has now taken the decision to retire and to stand down from the editorial board of the *Journal*. We, his fellow editors, could not allow this to pass without recording our sincere and heartfelt thanks for all Doug has done over the years to support us, our authors, the Foundation Year Network, and the wider cause of foundation years.