

## *Introduction*

The context for recent issues of the *Journal of the Foundation Year Network* has involved significant scrutiny and upheaval for foundation year provision and this year has not been an exception to that, with a media spotlight falling on disparities in degree outcomes between different types of provider for those entering university via foundation years.<sup>1</sup> *JFYN* has responded to this challenge by inviting contributions for a Special Issue with the aim of providing robust, evidence-based research that reflects what foundation years actually do for students, and properly contextualises their achievements.

This has also been the first academic year in which a reduced fee cap has been imposed on 'classroom-based' foundation years and we are yet to see the ramifications of this change. Perhaps more than ever, though, Issue 8 appears in the midst of widespread austerity and restructuring in the HE sector more generally, with an increasing number of universities operating in a financial deficit. In many cases this means that ongoing uncertainty around courses and jobs within foundation year provision, which increases the challenge of delivering and developing high quality teaching, is increasingly becoming a wider institutional norm. It is against this backdrop, as well as a volatile political context, that we continue to advocate for the value of foundation year provision and the people – both staff and students – who invest so much in this.

A notable development for *JFYN* in this issue is the publication of our first 'Example of Practice' article. Having recognised the value of such submissions over the years, we have created a new category for publication, alongside our more traditional research-based articles, for practitioners to provide examples, evidence – and encouragement! – to others. We expect these articles to be largely descriptive with no requirement for supporting empirical evidence, nor extensive references to academic literature. Rather, the emphasis is on how the author's experience and practice might be useful for others. There should therefore be a degree of replicability that will enable others to adopt similar practice in their own context, and we encourage authors to include an appendix of teaching materials for this purpose.

The development of this Example of Practice stream is very much in line with the aims and ethos of *JFYN* in supporting Foundation Year practitioners to share their insights and to encourage their professional development in the area of publication. To this end, 2026 has also seen the first online *JFYN* workshop: 'Writing for the *Journal of the Foundation Year Network*: How to write a submission that will be accepted first time' to be followed by

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<sup>1</sup> [Surge in students taking foundation years in UK as questions raised over outcomes](#), *Financial Times*, 25 March 2006 [accessed 21/5/26].

further in-person workshops on writing, and reviewing and editing, at this year's Foundation Year Network Annual Conference at the University of Sunderland. We are reliant on the dedication of volunteer reviewers and editors and hope that these workshops will encourage more people to become involved.

The six articles in this issue reflect the range from traditional research article to explicit example of practice, and cover topics from student motivation and engagement to skills development and teaching materials, across a range of subject areas in social sciences and STEM. As always, we hope that they will inform and inspire foundation year practitioners across the sector.

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