

Introduction

Publishing a journal at the end of the year prompts a certain retrospection.¹ Our primary aims in launching this new journal last year were to develop the work of the Foundation Year Network in promoting and supporting i) good practice in Foundation Year provision and ii) the development of academic and scholarly activities of Foundation Year practitioners. This second issue contributes to these aims in a variety of ways, not least through the journal having already become an established way for papers presented at the Network's Annual Conference to be developed and shared effectively beyond that context and beyond the Network.

The theme of this year's Annual Conference, organised and hosted by the University of Sussex on 10-11 July 2019, was 'Challenging the Deficit Model across Disciplines'. The first half of this issue is structured around this theme, with the opening paper by James Bartoli-Edwards (University of Sussex) representing our first solely student-authored contribution to the journal. The participation of students in conference presentations has been an important feature of the past three Annual Conferences and has greatly enriched the discussion. In turn, we would like to encourage future submissions to the journal from foundation year students past and present as we seek to provide a broad range of insights into the nature of foundation year provision.

The latter half of the issue turns to disciplinary specific topics, research and case studies with each author having also considered how their approaches might be applied in other foundation year contexts. The interdisciplinary nature of the Foundation Year Network – and often of foundation year provision in general – is certainly one of its strengths and both the Annual Conference and this journal represent opportunities to hear from and engage with a range of subject areas. This builds on aspects of the idea of 'unity in diversity' in foundation year provision that featured in our first issue but these opportunities for cross-disciplinary engagement may also go some way to addressing the challenges – expressed in Paul Howes' paper in this issue – in relation to understanding the deficit model 'across the disciplines'. In particular, the more we seek to understand disciplines which are in some way 'other' to us, the less likely we may be to fall into stereotypical thinking, or too quickly advocating 'one-size-fits all' approaches for foundation year provision in general.

2019 was also the year in which the independent panel, led by Philip Augar, published its report on post-18 education and funding. The recommendations from this review process raise significant questions about, and present continuing challenges for, foundation year provision and it is important to recognise the place of research into foundation years and their impact – whether for students, staff or institutions – in responding to these. As well as the Annual Conference, the Foundation Year Network holds a number of Workshops throughout the year and the September 2019 Workshop, at the University of Chester, was on the theme of 'Assessing the Value of Integrated Degrees with Foundation Year in Context: Institutional Level Responses to Augar'. Speaking at this event, Chris Millward, Director for Fair Access and Participation at the Office for Students, presented a number of questions for foundation year providers to respond to, including whether foundation years offer value for money, whether they deliver choice and

¹ Given that the final deadline for revisions fell during the period of industrial action across the sector, the decision was taken to delay publication of this issue until January 2020.

flexibility for students, and whether they are effective in building skills for those who otherwise would not reach Higher Education (see <https://foundationyear.ac.uk/fyn-workshop-assessing-the-value-of-integrated-degrees-with-fy-in-context/>). Related themes are drawn out in this issue, but we also encourage Foundation Year Network members involved in these Workshops and related discussions at institutional level to submit papers to the journal which respond in a variety of ways to these questions and challenges. It is our intention that the journal should provide an impetus for the fostering of collaborative, rigorous, research as we seek to respond to these issues raised by the Augar Review and develop valuable foundation year provision within the context of Higher Education.

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