Benefits and Challenges of Publishing Undergraduate Students’ Writing

Chrissy Burns
Instructor, English Language Centre
Editor-in-Chief, Inscribe
Outline:
Publishing undergraduate research and writing
Context: Hong Kong and PolyU
Our journal: Benefits and challenges
Best practices
Q & A discussion
### Publishing UG research and writing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Boyer Commission report (1998)</th>
<th>Pedagogical changes; Focus on real world results</th>
<th>Changes in scholarly publishing</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Desire of students to publish</td>
<td>Pervasive digital publishing</td>
<td>Libraries</td>
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<td>- Information literacy</td>
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<td>- Institutional repositories (IRs)</td>
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<td>- Open access</td>
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UG journals – some numbers

- “...Emerging campus synergy in support of UR, engaged learning and publishing” (Caprio, 2014, p. 150)

- **170+** undergraduate journals in the US (Stone, Benson & Beech, 2016)

- **1/3** of US institutions have 1+ online or print UG research journal (Kaitlin, as cited in Stone, Benson & Beech, 2016)

- 50% faculty-led / 50% student-run in the UK (cite)

Rationale / aims of journals

- “Legitimate outlets for the publication and celebration of outstanding student research” (Ko, 2011, p. 2)

- Promotion of student research or encouragement of student publication (80% of journal missions) (Ng et al., 2017)

  - Low-risk opportunity to engage in scholarly writing and critical appraisal of evidence
  - Develop writing and critical thinking skills
  - Develop leadership and critical appraisal skills (editorial board) (Ng et al., 2017)
# Student Journal Possibilities

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Types and sources of writing</th>
<th>Management and editing*</th>
<th>Technology and hosting</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Research / STEM, medicine, law, multidisciplinary, etc.</td>
<td>Faculty</td>
<td>Libraries</td>
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<td>Senior thesis</td>
<td>Students</td>
<td>IT department support</td>
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<tr>
<td>Course or program</td>
<td>Mix of faculty and students</td>
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<tr>
<td>Humanities &amp; general education</td>
<td>* reviewers, editors, advisers, proofreaders, editor-in-chief</td>
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Hong Kong
PolyU, ELC and GE / WAC

Founded 1937; university status in 1994
QS rankings in 2018: 95th in the world / 27th in Asia

28,499 students:
- 16,355 undergrads; 10,101 post-grads; 2,134 sub-degree
- 80% Hong Kong; 18% mainland China; 2.5% international

English Language Centre:
- 90+ academic staff
- Teach mandatory first-year English & discipline-specific English courses

2012: implementation of General Education / Writing Across the Curriculum
- ELC teachers provide pedagogical support and individual feedback and consultations to students (>5000 students, 20 assignment genres yearly)
The establishment of *Inscribe*

- An objective of grant to establish GE/WAC program

**Rationale:**
- Motivation for students to engage in WAC and writing
- Acknowledgement of students’ GE writing
- Development of a writing community on campus
- Open access, multi-disciplinary, published yearly
- Focuses on GE and ELC courses
- Open call for submission & emails to GE and ELC teachers
- No funding; minor time-off compensation for Editor-in-Chief
- Faculty support: 6 reviewers, 6 editors, 6 proofreaders
Revolution: The Right Way

- By Anoushka Mahar, Accounting & Finance student
- Persuasive writing course offered by ELC
- Manifesto – a call to action
- www.inscribe.elc.polyu.edu.hk
Students’ Top Benefits

1. Editing process / working with the editor (5/6)
   - “the more you edit the more you learn; it was something I really enjoyed”
   - “Meeting people who really enjoy writing”; “the interaction with the editor”

2. Learning / improving my writing (3/6)
   - “The best part was improving my writing skills”
   - “It added more to my arsenal of writing”

3. Finishing / satisfaction (2/6)
   - “When I finally finished, I felt very satisfied”; “when everything ended”

4. Confidence (2/6)
   - “Working with EIC and Editor... improved my confidence and interest in writing”

5. Enjoyment (1/6); Interest in writing (1/6)
   - “No academic deadline, no stress”
Students’ Biggest Challenges

1. Language (3/6)
   - “A specific paragraph. I kept editing it but it never seemed to be understandable. My audience was struggling to understand”
   - “Choosing the right words. I have a feeling and I don’t know how to express it.”
   - “…tiny but important words; how to recognise language errors”

2. Negotiations with the editor (2/6)
   - “Getting your message across to editors who...share a different perspective”
   - “The editor didn’t teach this subject before... we had disagreements”

3. Negative comments from the editor (1/6)
   - “The comments on the first editing draft... emotional barriers you try to overcome. ‘Unclear’, ‘Can’t picture that’ – it feels bad”
Faculty Challenges

• Interaction with the student
  - “Being patient with the students”
  - “Writing is a very personal thing... students have to be open to quite objective and critical feedback and learn to be editors”
  - “Committing students to revise”

• Unfamiliar genres of writing
  - “Some texts are quite technical”; “specific, unfamiliar genres”

• Workload
  - “Proofreading can be quite tedious, especially references and citations”
Faculty’s perceived benefits

• Publicity / promotion of ELC
• Showcase to the wider community (PolyU is more than vocational ed.)
• Motivate students to read and write
• We become more aware of the students’ expression, awareness, writing and how teachers can help

How more benefits can be realized:

• - needs more promotion outside the ELC
• - embedded in a course
• - expand the profile and readership
• - genre guidelines and vocabulary resources
# Challenges for universities

Cost, administrative and QC concerns (Walkington & Jenkins, 2017)

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<th>Administrative</th>
<th>Quality Control</th>
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<td>- Funding issues: showing the impact</td>
<td>- “Lateral costs” (Waye &amp; Simpson, 2016); faculty pressure and workload</td>
<td>- Sources of quality work</td>
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<td>- Financial sustainability of the hosting service</td>
<td>- Monitoring and oversight</td>
<td>- Students may need encouragement to submit</td>
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<td>- Publication costs</td>
<td>- Poor timing (semesters, graduation, summers)</td>
<td>- Systems of submission, editing, review</td>
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Challenges for universities

Cost, administrative and QC concerns (Walkington & Jenkins, 2017)

“A never-ending, precarious project, without funds securely set aside to ensure its longevity”

(Waye & Simpson, 2016)
Institutional Challenges of Inscribe

• Lack of time ("gift economy"/prestige); faculty time tied to grant funding
• Quality of submissions (assignment, writing, criticality)
• Wide scope / lack of focus / lack of writing community
• Lack of visibility and promotion (information overload / branding)
• Technology and hosting ($/time)
Conclusions

*Inscribe* is a unique and rich experience for students.

- Evidence of students’ benefits
- Supports aims of the ELC and PolyU
- Wider benefits to student body unknown
  - Students whose scripts are rejected?
- Clearer perspective on possibilities and ways of overcoming challenges
References


Mariani, M., Buckley, F., Reidy, T., & Witmer, R. (2013). Promoting student learning and scholarship through undergraduate research journals. PS: Political Science & Politics, 46(4), 830-835.


Active learning techniques, Reading videos, and more...

Chrissy Burns
Conference Sharing
Lilly Conference Austin 2018

- 25% health (nursing/medical)
- 25% sciences
- 20% humanities and social science
- 20% business
- 10% English/first year composition
- https://www.lillyconferences-tx.com/
Teachers’ complaints / common issues discussed
Common “complaints” about students

– Lack of engagement
– Can’t / don’t read
– Can’t write
Focus of this presentation

- 10 + active learning techniques
- short activities to structure and guide learning
- minimal planning; easy to incorporate into what you’re already doing
- technology or not
- Reading videos idea
- Gems of wisdom
Active learning technique (ALT #1)

- Skeleton notes
- - students don’t know how to take notes
ALT # 2 Polleverywhere

- Students can stay connected on their mobile phone
- Interactive, instant answers can prompt interesting class discussions
- Check for understanding
- What should we do next? – instant feedback
ALT #3: Prediction

– Activates the brain – neuroscience
-- predict course content, paragraph of writing
-- online tools, tell your partner
No learning without attention

- more than just giving information – must be structured and scaffolded – must be engaging (**Dornyei – Feb 26)
- real world, relates to their life
- Courses and classes must first focus on getting attention: relevance, value, context
GEM - Engagement

Engagement is a product of:

- Motivation
And
- Active learning
- A synergistic interaction
GEM: Teaching Synergy

1. ZPD – material and tasks are appropriately challenging
2. Building a sense of a learning community
3. Teaching for holistic learning
Holistic learning

– recognize the connectedness of mind, body and spirit.

– physical, personal, social, emotional and spiritual wellbeing as well as cognitive aspects of learning
ALT #4: Pre- and post- Quiz

- Quiz or survey of views before learning
- Quiz or survey of views after learning
- Comparison; how did knowledge or attitudes change?
ALT # 5: In-class quiz

- Quiz on previous learning
- Warm up for early birds?
- Quizizz, Kahoot
ALT # 6 – One sentence summary

– Have students summarise in one sentence what they have learned from the class lecture and activities.

– Ideas:
  – - why we reference / how to write an in-text citation
  – - how to find journal articles
GEM

– Reduce cognitive load / reduce distractions
– Overwhelm (e.g. referencing)
– Structuring and scaffolding of learning
– Teaching rather than testing
-- “Our courses are stepping stones or obstacles”
-- - making content relevant; news that connects to the class
ALT # 7- “Lecture wrapper”

– 3 most important ideas from today’s class / session
– Reflection
Active Reading Videos

– demonstration
Reflection and discussion

– A useful or interesting idea from today’s session