Development and delivery of a multidisciplinary student-led research journal at the University of Bristol

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Abstract

The Bristol Institute for Learning and Teaching (BILT) champions student co-production and collaboration at the University of Bristol. Current students at the university are employed to work collaboratively with staff across priority areas and annually set themes. The theme of 'students as researchers' is of particular importance to the university as it is a research-intensive institution that prioritises a research-rich curriculum. This paper presents the BILT Student Research Journal project that relates to this theme. The journal launched in 2019, inviting all undergraduate students to join the editorial board or to submit papers to the final published journal. In 2020, postgraduate students were added to the invitation. BILT Student Fellows act as Editors-in-Chief with a member of BILT academic staff providing additional support. Throughout the life of the journal, students retain autonomy over editorial decisions within subject areas and all participants learn more about the publication process and develop a range of transferable skills from the experience. This model of student-led and student-managed multidisciplinary academic work fosters improved appreciation for the research work undertaken by students and an improved relationship with the university. The processes of how the journal is managed, the benefits to students and the benefits to the institution are provided to facilitate the adoption of the model in other universities.

University of Bristol context

The aim of the Bristol Institute for Learning and Teaching (BILT) is to champion excellent practice and inspire learning and teaching innovation at the University of Bristol. Four long-term priorities address BILT's aims and scaffold activity: championing students as co-creators and researchers; celebrating success and developing teaching recognition; promoting programmatic design of curricula; and promoting evidence-based practice and scholarship. In 2017, BILT launched a programme of curriculum-focused events, funding opportunities and resources designed to engage with these priority areas in collaboration with staff and students.

Each year up to five Student Fellows from across levels and subjects are employed to work under BILT's annual thematic areas. Open calls for applicants are directed at all six faculties at both undergraduate and postgraduate level. Applications are encouraged from underrepresented and minority communities, facilitated through communications via student-run, Students' Union-run and institution-run networks (e.g. BAME, international and disabilities networks). To date, twenty-one students have been employed as BILT Student Fellows, with participants drawn from a wide breadth of demographic backgrounds and study levels (twelve postgraduates and nine undergraduates). The majority of fellows have come from Arts (8) and Social Sciences and Law (8), with less representation from STEM subjects (5).

Student Fellows work within a supported framework that facilitates autonomy to explore BILT's themes creatively including through the production of media assets (blogs, podcasts) and within project work. During the application process, students note which BILT theme(s) that they identify with most. Upon hiring, students are assigned to this theme either individually or in pairs, and are free to collaborate across themes flexibly as they deem necessary. Once in post, students are provided with inductions that encompass the work of previous Student Fellows and the wider BILT team, as well as institutional priorities. Together with the BILT team, they then determine projects that they will tackle over the year. These include suggestions from the BILT team, such as continuing previously successful projects. Ultimately, students determine their own projects autonomously, as long as they are moderately practical and match BILT's overarching aims in some way. A discretionary Student Fellows budget of £2,000 is provided, in addition to access to software and hardware, to allow for the generation of new mixed media content and to facilitate new ideas. Students bring novel approaches and insights to BILT's work. As such, student projects are their own and the BILT team is available to provide support frameworks that adapt to their ambitions.

The BILT team provides guidance on how to navigate the university's structures and invites the Student Fellows into central decision-making spaces, such as Education Committee Board meetings. Here, the student voice becomes part of central strategic decision-making systems. Additionally, the Student Fellows are in regular dialogue with the Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Education. Together, these efforts ensure that students are co-creators and partners in their education.

One enduring BILT theme is 'students as researchers.' This theme is reflected in the university's Education Strategy: *"We will ensure [...] that all students experience a culture of research and the excitement of discovery"* (University of Bristol, 2017, p. 2). The Curriculum Framework reflects this drive to situate students as agents in their own learning, as producers of knowledge, and scholars in their field (University of Bristol, 2018).

This paper outlines an example of how BILT supports the initiatives of Student Fellows under the theme of 'students as researchers.' The journal project sits outside the curriculum but is informed by curriculum-based research by undergraduate and taught postgraduate students. By inviting students from all disciplines to collaborate on the project, the journal serves as an example of a multi-disciplinary activity.

Higher Education UK context

The provocations for placing students at the heart of student-led research-rich learning are multitude in the UK Higher Education (HE) sector. Kay, Dunne & Hutchinson (2010, p.1) state: *"All of us recognise the importance of the 'student voice' and of listening to students… But the concept of the student voice can be passive and disempowered, governed and operated by the institution rather than by students themselves."* This assertion demands that the student voice is active and that students are empowered to act autonomously. Here, a tension emerges between what an institution *permits* its students to do and what it can do to *support* its students to act. While it is important that students be given regular opportunities to use their voice, they must also be allowed to lead on *actioning* initiatives that empower them. These ambitions face problems when moving from idea to action, typically in the form

of institutional barriers to student-staff partnerships, and incompatible local cultures (Bovill & Felten, 2016). Good practice guidance suggests that student-staff partnerships should aspire to develop power-sharing and inclusive partnerships, and accept *"a process with uncertain outcomes"* (Matthews 2017, p. 2). A measure of uncertainty in a HE sector beset by metrics, key performance indicators and league tables is, perhaps, unsettling for some organisational leaders, but it is a premise that helps to manage expectations and allows for a developmental mindset accepting of failure and change.

Research-led universities often attempt to embed academic research into the student learning experience, creating one category of research-rich learning. For example, as part of their twenty-year research plan, University College London (UCL) programme teams are advised to engage students with the university's research profile so as to inform *"students understanding how knowledge is created, being partners in that process and having experience of working with the uncertainties at the edge of knowledge"* (Smith, 2014). Here, emphasis is placed on work already being produced by the university, as opposed to the students' own work, and is situated within the formal curriculum. At Swansea Metropolitan University (now part of the University of Wales Trinity Saint David), research staff followed specific guidance to produce informative blogs on the realities and lived experience of undertaking research. These blogs helped to dismantle cognitive barriers that students encounter when engaging with research, whilst encouraging them to develop greater confidence when encountering research activities by embedding use of the blogs into teaching and learning settings (Riley, 2010). At both Teesside University (2021) and York St John University (2021) the theme of students as researchers is engaged through employment whereby students work alongside research staff to conduct literature reviews, data collection and analysis and more. Work on live research projects provides students with a range of research-specific skills in addition to connecting with the university in a different engaged way. Such activities place students in roles of responsibility, acting as researchers while still undergraduate students, in a role beyond that of a student learner engaged with their core curriculum. Work-based student-researcher approaches are also embedded within curricula, such as within a recent pilot project in Law at the University of Nottingham (Dickinson, Ferris & Marson 2021).

Writing for the Higher Education Academy (now AdvanceHE), Helen Walkington's *Students as researchers: Supporting undergraduate research in the disciplines in higher education* (2015) explores key strategies that support students as researchers. Walkington covers important topics such as pedagogy, curriculum frameworks, skills development, and benefits of student research. Of particular relevance to this paper is her coverage of undergraduate research journals. Walkington notes the multitude of benefits resulting from students working on such journals, drawn from collated HE exemplars and the author's qualitative analysis. These benefits include: better understanding of the research process; greater visibility online relating to employment; improved writing confidence; and inspirational and aspirational goal setting (Walkington, 2015, p. 23-25). The examples chosen are principally extracted from curriculum-based settings and, as such, are scaffolded, managed and assessed by staff. The recommendations for good practice made by the author stem from this curriculum setting and, as such, are less usefully applied to the extra-curricular setting detailed below. The benefits listed above do, however, serve as a touchstone benchmark by which the relative success of undergraduate journals can be measured.

Subject-specific student research journals are the most common form of journals produced by students at university and are produced with enormous variation. For example, a review of political science journals demonstrates the diversity of timescales, submission requirements, student-roles, staff-roles, curricula and extra-curricula settings, and levels of institutional support offered (Mariani *et al.*, 2013). Such diversity speaks to both the approach to providing journal structures that match the context in which they operate, and the different levels of resourcing provided. In their synopsis of undergraduate research journals in the UK, Stone, Jensen and Beech (2016, p. 150) critique the limited scope of some journals, stating that "many of the titles have been developed as marketing opportunities for universities or departments rather than peer-reviewed research journals". This sentiment echoes the prompt for good practice in student-staff partnerships posited by Matthews (2017, p. 2), specifically the importance of ethical integrity whereby university-based student-led research journals should principally benefit students over other (marketised) considerations.

The University of Huddersfield's student research journal *Fields* is, perhaps, the closest comparable example to the case study presented below due to its invitation to cross-faculty student research (Stone, Jensen and Beech, 2016). However, there are key differences, notably: the concept and development was undertaken exclusively by staff; the scale and scope of staff support was much larger, involving all faculties and extensive networks of professional services teams; the first call for papers stemmed from staff recommendations rather than student applications; reviews and recommendations were made by staff; and just twelve papers were ultimately published. These expansive efforts result in a polished and rigorous academic output that meet high-quality publication standards. This format does, however, result in limited student voice within the editorial process and a large workload burden for staff. Additionally, after full evaluation of the Huddersfield model, the institution rejects some of Walkington's (2015) recommendations so as to move forward with the journal without involving undergraduate students in the publication process or training post-graduates as reviewers (Stone, Jensen and Beech, 2016, p. 163). As this example demonstrates, student journals may be student-engaged but not student-empowered.

As expressed through the previous examples, existing student research journals in the UK have a predominantly subject-siloed focus on undergraduate research, resulting in disciplinary co-research primarily focusing on topics emerging from those of the academic staff. This typically limits the participation of postgraduate students within the student research journal to peer review roles, whilst more executive editorial roles are carried out by academic staff. In this context, the BILT Student Research Journal presents a novel initiative that: incorporates collaboration of undergraduate, and both taught and research postgraduate students; is created and led by students rather than staff; offers students a means to promote their research outside of the formal curriculum; and facilitates interdisciplinarity and cross-discipline collaboration.

The BILT Student Journal

In the academic year 2019-2020, a Student Fellow approached BILT management with a new concept for the institution, a student-run academic journal. Two academics in the Department of History (Dr James Freeman and Dr John Reek) provided additional support in the design and development of the journal. The aims of the journal were to: provide a

platform for all undergraduate students to have their academic work published; foster recognition by students of the research work they undertake within their studies; and create a space for students to engage in each other's research. Over one hundred students joined the editorial board following an open call across the university and twelve subject boards were founded. The journal received two-hundred submissions with a final eighty papers published online in June 2020 (https://bilt.online/students_-researchers-journal3/). In its first year, the journal was viewed over 2,000 times.

The success of the journal secured the desire for BILT to continue the project. A handover pack was produced that included: communication and recruitment strategies; editing and InDesign guidance; meeting notes; peer review process structures; style guides; suggested timescales and general tips; role descriptors; and details of students on the editorial board who wished to continue their roles. This documentation step was essential to share lessons from the previous year, should the journal be taken forward again.

Following the success of the first iteration of the BILT Student Journal, the concept was taken forward into the 2020-2021 academic year. This time, two Student Fellows jointly operated the journal, sharing the role of Editor-in-Chief, supported by an academic member of the BILT team. Guidance from the first year was translated into a tracking document that served as a project management tool. Here, each area of activity was listed along with the activity status and timescale to completion. As the project progressed, marking off completed actions provided motivation to the Student Fellows and ensured that momentum was carried through the life of the project. The tracker also served to identify gaps in the planning schedule, points of activity that were not otherwise documented in the previous run or not considered for inclusion in the second run, so that a full data-capture of all activities could better be recorded for future runs of the journal. Key actions noted on the tracker included: the preparation and sharing of communication materials; the process and results of reviewing Editorial Board applications; activities relating to the calls for proposals, such as preparing online forms; the process and results of reviewing article submissions; the peer review process; and the publication phase.

A major change from the first to second run was the expansion to include postgraduate students. BILT's remit is to support the taught curriculum and it was deemed appropriate to include participation in the Editorial Board and publication process to both undergraduates and taught postgraduates. Research postgraduates (PGRs) are supported to publish in other ways (e.g. within their Schools and via the Bristol Doctoral College). PGRs were, however, invited to join the Editorial Board. This was considered beneficial to all students involved, especially since PGRs tend to have more in-depth knowledge of academic quality and integrity considerations. Inclusion of PGRs also expands the cross-year engagement of students so that learnings and experience can be more easily shared between cohorts.

In both runs of the journal, communications across the university invited applications from all subjects to join the Editorial Board and create Subject Boards for individual disciplines. Over one hundred students joined the Editorial Board in both years, with a critical mass for subject boards emerging in the following faculties: Arts, Social Sciences and Law, Health Sciences, and Life Sciences. Unfortunately, very few students applied from Engineering and Science in both years, an issue that will be addressed by BILT through planned focus groups with students in those faculties. The level of applications to publish in the journal remained stable

in both years, demonstrating consistency of interest despite additional pandemic-related stresses on students.

The first run of the journal placed appropriate value on the role of peer reviewing. A workshop was offered to Subject/Deputy Editors by the Editor-in-Chief who then in turn conveyed the learning to their subject boards. The added benefit was that these editors also engaged in the act of teaching which is a developmental opportunity. The second run of the journal capitalised on peer review training offered by an experienced member of academic staff based in the Centre for Academic Language Development (CALD) recorded during the concurrent BILT *Festival of Undergraduate Research* event. This was accompanied by an overview document on the expected structure for the peer review process with tips tailored to different editorial board roles. A tracker was created to note completion of all stages of the peer review process and a template review form was provided to ensure consistency within the review process. The template offered prompts for each reviewer to respond to as relevant, such as consideration of the appropriateness and organisation of the paper.

The journal launched pre-pandemic but transitioned to online-only working as the effects of COVID-19 impacted the university. The second run operated exclusively and by-design in a digital-only format. Two dedicated spaces were created via MS Teams: a space for the sixteen Subject Editors to discuss all aspects of the journal, with access to pre-anonymised content; and the Editorial Board space with all 123 members, including Subject Editors. In both spaces, the general chat facility proved popular and useful, and facilitated cross-subject board communications. This provided the Editorial Board with direct access to the Editors-in-Chief and BILT staff so that concerns and issues were resolved with speed. The MS Teams space hosted all documentation for the project, from guidance documents to trackers and article submissions. While the Editorial Board were welcome to use whatever digital spaces they preferred, all subject boards took advantage of the spaces provided, using them near-exclusively.

Most questions posed to the Editors-in-Chief concerned what Subject Editors were allowed to do or not. Requests to clarify formatting options, such as referencing styles and length of papers, were the largest category of concern. There were also queries as to what extent editors and peer reviewers should or should not make suggestions for changes or improvements to papers. As the summer exams period arrived, the space was used to discuss the provision of extensions and changes to the planned timescales of the peer review process. A benefit of the cross-subject MS Teams space was that it allowed editors to discuss papers that potentially fit better in other subject areas, such as between Policy Studies and Politics and International Relations. Subject Editors were also concerned practically and emotionally with potential rejections. This level of responsibility was exacerbated by feelings of guilt and worries about students feeling excluded upon rejection. In all cases, prompt replies and discussions with the BILT team ensured that problems were quickly and collaboratively resolved. The BILT team used these discussions to reinforce the autonomy of Subject Editors in final decision-making processes, providing suitable options for them to consider and approve.

To ensure that the Editorial Board focused their time and efforts on meaningful tasks, much of the more monotonous and laborious documentation work was undertaken by the BILT team in the second run of the journal. Principally this concerned the anonymisation and novel referencing system of submitted articles, the creation and moderation of process

trackers, and document management between both MS Teams spaces to ensure anonymity was protected at every stage of the peer review process.

The publication process of the first journal resulted in a single 872-page PDF file, with embedded hyperlinks for navigation. To improve this format, new models of digitally hosting and sharing the journal were investigated for the second run. It was determined that the public-facing view of the journal should present the title and author of each article on the web hosting platform, categorised by subject, and hyperlinked to individual file download options. This format also improves search engine optimisation (SEO) for the journal outputs.

Subject and level overview

At the point of application to the 2020/2021 Editorial Board and article submission, data was collected (no data was collected from the 2019/2020 cohort). This provides insight into the various levels of study and subjects most engaged with the Student Journal project. In total, 185 applications were received from across all six faculties, with the lowest levels of applications in Science and Engineering. Neither of these two faculties received a critical mass of students in terms of school discipline to warrant the formation of a Subject Board. In Arts and Social Sciences and Law, many postgraduate applications were received, with more undergraduate representation in Arts than in Social Sciences and Law. Life Sciences and Health Sciences presented the largest by percentage of undergraduate applications.

The Editorial Board application form asked respondents which position(s) they wanted to apply to, what motivated them to apply, and what skills and experience they would be able to bring to the role. Together, these responses provided the means by which the BILT team, led by the Student Fellows, invited 123 of the applicants to join editorial boards across fourteen subjects. Once acceptance to the boards was confirmed, and following induction, it was the duty of Subject Editors to lead the call for abstract submissions to the journal in their subject.

In total, 199 abstracts were submitted for consideration by the Editorial Board. Faculties received the following number of applications: Social Sciences and Law, 75; Arts, 68; Life Sciences, 33; and Health Sciences, 21. Undergraduate students represent the largest number of submissions (125) while PGT submissions were second largest (72), two PGRs submitted in error and were excluded from the dataset. Undergraduate submissions were received from every level of study, with the largest proportion from third years (61). First and second years submitted the same number of abstracts (22, 22), while nineteen submissions were received from fourth and fifth year students.

Editorial Board feedback

Anonymous evaluation data was collected from the 2020/2021 Editorial Board via an online feedback form as development of the journal ended. The questions were designed to elicit both quantitative and qualitative data, focusing on the benefits to students of being part of the Editorial Board. Of the 123 students supplied with the form, twenty-seven responses were collected.

Overall, students found the journal experience to be beneficial. Three in four of the respondents believed that participating within the journal editorial process to be beneficial to their academic development, with four in five students saying that they would recommend participating with the journal to other students. Positive improvement was noted in terms of collaboration, with respondents noting that their shared passion for research encouraged better collaboration. Seven in ten respondents found that they had also advanced their reflectivity and adaptivity skills meaning that they took responsibility for their own tasks within the context of their associated subject area.

Half of respondents found that they had a greater confidence to publish their own work in future (*"It will help me write my own articles in future"*). This was partially due to the editorial board furthering their understanding of the journal submission and editorial process. This also led to students learning more about their subject area through exposure to articles outside of their normal areas of interest. In the future, more questions will be posed to ascertain how greater confidence in publishing work can be encouraged; 50% greater confidence is a success but one that may be improved through greater levels of guidance and support.

Additionally, students experienced a greater level of understanding of the assessment marking that their own assignments go through during the university submission process. As students explained:

> *"Every time I submit work to my supervisor, she used to criticise my diction. She would say, 'gloss this term for the non-expert', 'imagine your reader is intelligent but doesn't know your texts very well', 'keep your sentences shorter or I can't follow them.' I used to really struggle to understand how she meant, but as soon as I started reviewing submissions, I completely understood! I had so many of the same criticisms, and now my own writing has greatly improved.*
>
> *I came to understand that academics grade my assessments following the same criteria that we were looking for in abstracts and papers, as well as feedback spotted during the peer review process."*

These experiences are demonstrably useful for students' understanding of assessments and success with future academic assignments. There is, perhaps, a change in the appreciation of the value of assessment criteria and the meaning of feedback. As such, the Student Journal is a curriculum-supportive activity.

Students also identified the difficulties in grading papers and the variations in the application of grading criteria and the challenges of providing feedback, e.g. *"I understand now how difficult it is sometimes to communicate criticism in a constructive way."* This comment indicates that students perceive the value of constructive criticism and the challenges of communicating well to the benefit of the receiver of such criticism. Another student commented: *"It will always be important to understand what reviewers are looking for as it will help writers reflect on their own writing and whether or not it reads well and includes what it needs to without writing too much."* This quote shows that students are employing other perspectives on their writing and the writing of others in order to assess work in terms of the reader's experience, and with consideration of editing and brevity.

Challenges

Small issues arose during the editing phase of the journal. In some cases, there was a disconnect between the guidance provided and students accessing and applying the guidance. For example, students did not read emails or attached guidance documents, or watch the training video, then were uncertain how to undertake editing activities. These issues were minor and resolved quickly through direct messages and emails. They did, however, require additional contact time from the BILT team to an unexpected degree. In the future, this time will be factored into the journal planning. On the whole, major issues through the editing process were rare. Where an issue arose, subject editors were quick to raise it with the BILT team. For example, one subject-editor was concerned with overly harsh comments made by an editor. The BILT team worked with the subject-editor to review the comments and collaboratively resolved not to share the unwarranted comments with the article author, as to do so would have no productive value and could potentially cause unnecessary stress. Instead, the comments were edited to reflect only those that were relevant, with additional feedback provided by the subject-editor.

Timescales that perfectly match the preferences and availability of all students across degree programmes are virtually impossible to facilitate. As such, students occasionally felt frustrated due to clashes with exams or essay deadlines. This affected some cohorts and not others. For copy-editors there was an additional frustration as their role was predominantly actioned late in the overall journal process. To address this issue, attempts were made to draw these students into forward planning with the subject-editors. Other frustrations were experienced when some students over-promised and under-delivered within their subject teams. This was a more difficult matter to redress as all students were voluntarily engaged in the activity and there were no obvious repercussions for a lack of engagement. For some students, it was enough to have their grievances heard, recognised and validated. To supplement emotional support, the BILT team also offered additional help in case of any gap within the subject team.

A significant limitation of this paper is the lack of demographic understanding of the journal participants. Calls to participate were widely distributed across staff and student networks, including the BAME (Black, Asian and Minority Ethnicities) and students with disabilities groups. However, neither the demographics of participating students nor the demographic specifics of respondents to the follow-up survey were captured. This decision was deliberated on at length by the team. Ultimately, it was decided that capturing demographic information at the call for participation stage might dissuade students from applying by lengthening the application process and asking for perceived non-essential information. The consensus was that on balance a broad call, including direct communications to minority communities, was sufficient. Likewise, the survey did not request demographic information as there was concern that to do so would make respondents individually identifiable and therefore feel less comfortable responding. These decisions may be revisited in future so that demographic information can identify engagement gaps, with the aim of potentially improving inclusivity.

Another challenge is the lack of impact measures. Unlike many mainstream journals, the BILT Student Journal does not produce impact indices. BILT administrators are able to see how many times an individual webpage has been viewed, but otherwise journal-related

statistics are not available. In response to this issue, discussions are underway with the institution's Library Services to investigate more advanced journal-hosting options that will facilitate such features, in addition to global indexing of the articles. In-house partnerships or external third-party hosting suppliers to increase the visibility of the journal are also being explored.

Benefits

The BILT Student Research Journal proved beneficial to the university and its students in several ways. The COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent lockdowns resulted in numerous impacts on students - especially regarding isolation, disconnection with learning and teaching and lack of engagement. It was within this context that the Student Research Journal was released: the first issue transitioned unexpectedly into operating online and remotely; while the second issue was designed to operate exclusively online. This extra-curricular and curriculum-complimentary activity worked well remotely, proving the model's resilience and flexibility, and its suitability for digital-only environments. The journal enabled students to embed their research outside of the curriculum, which enriched their engagement and participation with their subject, and developed confidence in their own academic ability.

Students also encountered new ways to improve their knowledge and skills, particularly regarding academic publishing, collaboration, reflection, adaptability, and personal confidence. For many students, involvement on the editorial board served as evidence for the Bristol Plus award, a prestigious university careers accreditation for extracurricular activities that is recognised by external employers. The award requires that a member of staff confirm the student's evidence, which is a task undertaken by the BILT team rather than the Student Fellows.

Through inter-year collaboration, undergraduate students learned from their peers and postgraduate students. In particular, undergraduate students learned more about the process of publishing, deepening their understanding of the nature of both academic research and research articles. Students gained the notable academic accomplishment of publishing a peer-reviewed article while an undergraduate, which can be helpful for future job applications and when applying to undertake further study at postgraduate level. Reading articles by their peers and acting as peer reviewers also affords students the opportunity to deepen their disciplinary knowledge.

The journal proved to be an excellent venue for student empowerment and the incorporation of independent work within a group setting. The journal experience offered individual achievement and the mutual benefit of a large shared outcome. Student empowerment comes from the value placed on students' efforts and outputs. The journal allows students to appreciate their research as 'real research'. As the final papers are open access, students can also recognise that they are actively contributing to knowledge in their field through in-depth, original and innovative research whether it is the work that they write, or the work that they support through the editorial process to publication. When student research is published in this way, the student voice within research becomes publicly visible and, as facilitated by the institution, is an act of student empowerment.

Relating to the COVID-19 pandemic, student-led group activities undertaken at this time helped to support the formation of meaningful connections in the face of increased feelings of isolation. For many students, the pandemic led to restricted venues for students to connect with their peers. The journal provided a common focus that helped to create a sense of community, providing them with an opportunity to meet others outside of their curriculum.

Unexpected positive outcomes followed the second run of the journal. During the advertisement phase of the journal, several Instagram posts curated by Student Fellows reached out to the Bristol student community. Unexpectedly, students in other universities also saw the posts. One such student commented that they wished to have something similar at their institution. Following this comment, the student discussed the concept with an academic in their subject. The academic welcomed the idea and subsequently other senior members of staff also expressed interest. As a result, the institution now plans to run a university-wide version of the BILT Student Journal across all subjects. This is a good example of unexpected positive outcomes of public-facing student-created social media communications leading to the adoption of student-centred initiatives. Additionally, in the academic year following the second run of the journal, a noticeable volume of students applied for the BILT Student Fellow roles after their experience of working on the journal.

Conclusions

The BILT Student Research Journal concept, processes and outcomes forged positive relations between the university and its students, and between different student groups. Students benefited from the range of skills development opportunities and the chance to publish a peer-reviewed article. The university benefited from meeting its institutional ambitions towards better supporting and celebrating students as researchers. The processes described in this article also provide other HE institutions with a model to replicate or adapt to suit similar ambitions in different contexts. In particular, the BILT model demonstrates the value of placing students as the leaders in such initiatives, trusting students to achieve shared goals, and how academic and professional services staff can enable such activity while maintaining a student-centred approach. The BILT Student Research Journal puts into practice the concept of staff-student partnerships beyond the curriculum that at once celebrate curriculum learning while moving beyond it, providing a space for interdisciplinary encounters, and centering student action.

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