
2010

Multi-level Linking of Teaching and Extra-curricular Activity with Professional Planning Research: The Case of the Lincoln Planning Review

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In January 2009, the Lincoln University Planning Association (LUPA) published the first issue of the *Lincoln (University) Planning Review (LPR)*. The creation and development of the *LPR* is a practical example of 'learning by doing' that demonstrates the potential of using a cross-over journal to grow student understanding of professional research practice

Pedagogical context

A common goal of professionally accredited planning programmes is to produce fit-for-purpose professional planners. The development of research is secondary, and yet in a 'publish or perish' era, universities are actively intervening to encourage increased research output (McGrail *et al.* 2006). Such interventions are usually targeted at staff and post-graduate or graduate students (Larcombe *et al.* 2007, Aitchison 2009, Ferguson 2009). The development of a research ethos amongst undergraduate planning students appears absent from the literature, perhaps due to the professional orientation of recognised programs and lower expectations for undergraduates generally. This is not to suggest that professional planning institutes consider research skills as unimportant for planners (see, for instance, New Zealand Planning Institute (NZPI) 2009), but it may reflect the nature of students enrolling for professional planning programmes.

The professionally accredited planning programmes at Lincoln University are streams within more broadly named degrees at both undergraduate and graduate level. Less than ten students enrol in the final year of the undergraduate professional planning stream and about five students each year undertake the required components of the taught masters degree. With no requirement to undertake a research thesis in either programme there is not a natural link between the practice-oriented skills of the professional streams (at either level) and research.

The NZPI reviews its accredited programmes every five years and Lincoln University faced a review in October 2008. The previous review (NZPI 2003, p.23) had expressed concern that:

In contrast to the identity they enjoy at more traditional universities, undergraduate planning students at Lincoln are to some extent isolated individuals in larger classes explicitly linked only in administrative terms. While not unhappy with their lot, there is a perceived need for encouraging a more cohesive identity...



In response, a pro-active graduate student had, with staff support, established the Lincoln University Planning Association (LUPA) in 2007, but little else had been demonstrably done to address the lack of a coherent identity. There was no sense of an inter-cohort collegiality at the undergraduate level or between undergraduate and graduate levels.

Lincoln was also under pressure to more vigorously promote its planning programmes to boost student numbers at a time when the community at large seemed unsupportive of the profession and universities generally were focussing on research productivity rather than the needs of particular professions. Publicity brochures and websites were mooted, but the cost of production of promotional material for specific degrees, let alone subordinate programmes like professional planning, was a major constraint. In addition, few staff were enthusiastic about diverting energy into something that would not improve their research ratings at the next national performance assessment – publish or ‘perish’ had become a reality for New Zealand academics.

The Concept

The idea of a planning newsletter for the community and schools as a promotional tool was raised in 2007 by a new staff member, but the potential costs of production and the difficulty in generating content seemed prohibitive. However, memories of the television programme *The Paper Chase* served as an inspirational exemplar for the idea of a student-led journal, something beyond a newsletter. The establishment of a new ‘virtual’ Land, Environment and People Research Centre (LEaP) led to a solution to the production costs. While primarily focussed on boosting research productivity, LEaP was also expected to have a community and end-user outreach focus, and had administrative resources to establish and maintain an active website. This opened the door for an online journal. The concept was initially raised at a meeting with four graduate level planning students, including the originator of LUPA, in July 2007

The intention was to focus on issues relevant to the planners in the local region to avoid being seen as competing with the existing NZPI national journal (*Planning Quarterly*) or intrude on other planning programme ‘territories’. The content would comprise two short ‘grunty’ articles on topical local planning issues, some independent reporting on other topical issues or symposia, brief notes on current Lincoln planning research (e.g., PhD research), news items on national planning or policy issues of local import, profiles of new staff or other local people of interest to planning, and an ‘agony aunt’ column. From the outset it was specifically intended that students would write articles as a way of “helping them develop research, communication and practical planning skills, and adding to their CV” (email

Rennie to Memon and Becken, 27 July 2007). It was hoped that *Planning Quarterly*, would republish articles of more national interest. The links to staff research, the overall university strategy and professional accreditation were also explicit¹.

The students responded positively and undertook to draw up a proposal based on those discussions, but by March 2008 nothing had progressed due to course commitments and the departure of students to their new planning careers.

In July 2008, the concept's 'champion' became the new examiner for the planning stream of a third year professional practice course and set a new assignment – to research and write an article for a student produced professional planning academic journal. They would not be compelled to publish, but if they chose to this would provide the solid core of the newsletter. Additional material could be added by drawing on the good will of some staff and other students (e.g., graduate students) who might have done particularly good assignments or be willing to summarise their research for publication. Produced twice yearly, the newsletter would be published free online through the examiner's involvement with LEaP. The newsletter would therefore also help to attract people to the research centre website and provide publicity for the planning programmes and research.

With the NZPI accreditation visit coming closer, a proposal with a vision and set of objectives² (Rennie 2008). These were supported by an administration structure comprising an Editor-in-Chief (a permanent staff member), Operational Editor (appointed from LUPA), Editorial Board (LUPA

¹ "In terms of PBRF [the Performance Based Research Fund] this would earn useful points for contributing to the research environment, and in terms of LU [Lincoln University] and TEC (New Zealand's Tertiary Education Commission) it should help to highlight our distinctive contribution to the region and nation. It could be reproduced as a PDF on the LU website (especially if we had a planning webpage) and linked to NZPI. This initiative should also help us look good when NZPI come to do accreditation" (email Rennie to Memon and Becken, 27 July 2007).

² **Vision:** To be the pre-eminent source of information on planning issues, research and education in and affecting the Central and upper South Island. **Objectives:** To: provide an avenue for Lincoln University planning students to develop skills in professional communication; provide a means of keeping the community, high school teachers and educators, and professional planners informed of local or regional topical planning issues: enable the professional exchange of information and views that is of local or regional, rather than national, interest; share updates and results of planning related research among local practitioners; complement and facilitate the roles of the *Planning Quarterly* and the newsletters and work of the Canterbury-Westland Branch of the NZPI and the Lincoln University Planning Association; promote professional planning education and research; address issues of concern to *mana whenua* (Maori of the particular area) and encourage capacity building in planning among indigenous peoples generally; contribute to the research environment, and: contribute to the distinctive contribution made by Lincoln University to the region and the nation.

members and LU staff) and a Permanent Editorial Advisory Board (including senior academics and a representative of the NZPI's Young Planners Group). This provided the stability to handle transitions from one issue to the next and turnovers in students and staff, while also connecting with the university hierarchy and the NZPI. The editorial board was expected to provide peer review at a professional level and to provide final proofreading services. The bulk of the work was to be done by graduate level students with the idea of inculcating an appreciation of the requirements to bring articles up to a professional standard of writing and relevance, and broadening their understanding of the field.

Initially named the *Lincoln University Planning Review* the first issue was released in January 2009, eighteen months after first being discussed with students and three months after completion of the first course where writing articles was a required component. A second issue was produced in July, and two issues (March and August) of Volume Two, were published in 2010 with the word 'University' dropped from the title to distinguish it from official University publications.

The combination of the pressure of the impending NZPI review, the need to more vigorously promote the planning programmes, new staff, and the advent of a new research centre had created an opportunity to gain University and collegial support for a new professional journal with a guaranteed source of potential content.

The Evolving Reality

The scope of the publication has evolved somewhat as have the mechanics of its production and publishing. Initially, the assignment was set requiring students in the SOCI 314 course to write up to 1500 words describing a topical local planning issue (selected from a list prepared by the Editor-in-Chief), clearly setting out the objective facts, the nature of the issues under debate and the state of play, all in language suitable for the general public. They were to end the article with a comment relating the issue to more general issues of planning theory and practice. In subsequent years they were also required to write book reviews on planning texts, four of which have been published.

Graduate students were asked informally, in a group setting, if they had any interest in being involved in peer-reviewing articles for a new journal/newsletter. It was suggested it was an opportunity to broaden their knowledge of topical planning issues, help develop their critical capacity and other skills relevant to professional planning, and could look good on their curriculum vitae.

The response was sufficiently positive to encourage going to the next step and providing them with the set of third year assignments, with all identifiers removed, for them to review as peers. Undergraduate (first and second year) students also responded positively to suggestions that this might be something interesting to be involved in.

The initial issues depended heavily on the support of a few committed students at both levels, with considerable time invested by the Editor-in-Chief to guide, discuss, demonstrate, provide exemplary models and write 'missing' components of the intended content. By 2010, undergraduate students were taking a much more significant role in *LPR*. An undergraduate student played a key role in convening the editorial board and its ad hoc policy development committee developed a policy manual and set of operational policies. The administrative structure and the roles of the operational editor and editorial board have been significantly revised based on reflections by the students on each issue after publication and the need to clarify roles and responsibilities to enable the tasks to be more efficiently and rigorously completed (Blyth *et al.*, 2010). Thirty-six staff and students have contributed in editorial/production or writing roles, and a further fourteen 'outsiders' have also contributed. These include Australian academics and two students from the local secondary school. About sixty percent of articles submitted were published.

Initially those most involved in *LPR* were mature students, but there seems to be more interest from younger students now it is more established. The two content editors of the current issue are both undergraduate students who played significant roles in the last edition and had been involved from the outset in lesser roles. All this work was extra-curricular, only the third year students doing the professional planning course gained any credits for their work.

It is too early to be able to provide more than a preliminary assessment of the effectiveness of *LPR* in achieving all the objectives set for it. Initial signs are good on several fronts, but here we focus on its contribution to developing linkages with research.

Building Linkages with Research

One of the primary goals of *LPR* was to develop professional skills useful for planners. But from the outset it was intended that the experience would build an understanding of research and the research profession. It was also intended to be an outreach journal that connected with planners, particularly within the central and upper parts of the South Island. The extent to which the focus should be on research was debated from the time the first editorial team came together.

Being the equivalent of the *Harvard Law Review* for South Island planners was jokingly mentioned, and parallels were drawn to the New Zealand law school journals that published staff and high class student dissertation research.

These journals, however, were largely driven and edited by senior academics, were published in print form and were for a largely academic audience. They also had a larger number of graduate student research theses and dissertations to draw on. Most students doing Lincoln's graduate programme had opted for taught courses over research dissertation options. Given the relatively small number of graduates who would be doing research degrees in planning, a ready source for high level research material could not be relied on. Strangely, PhD students doing planning research have not engaged at all in *LPR*, despite its clear potential to assist them in developing their skills.

The NZPI's *Planning Quarterly* has a 1500 word limit on articles which was not conducive to research articles, but it remains the pre-eminent publication for New Zealand's professional planners. There appeared to be an opening for a publication that had more space and included genuine research articles, however, the *Planning Quarterly* had developed its style partly in response to feedback from its members. There were therefore sound reasons for not emphasising the research aspect of the *LPR* beyond a level that appeared to meet the professions' needs.

Research Emphasis

A major shift towards a research focus occurred in 2010. A practising lawyer, who was concurrently a part-time PhD student at Ghent University, had been asked to write a synopsis of a relevant case for *LPR*. Instead he produced a full research article on contemporary New Zealand water law. When it was pointed out to him that there were potentially more renowned publications that might welcome his article, he responded that the field was changing too swiftly for his article to be relevant if it waited for the review process of better known academic publications, that to cover the area adequately required more space than the *Planning Quarterly* or similar professional publications would provide, and that he was keen to boost the profile of his company and his expertise in water law in the central South Island region. Given the technical difficulty of the material covered it was sent to external peer review experts in the field. This article (Makgill 2010) became the first fully blind-peer reviewed article in *LPR* and has resulted in very favourable feedback from readers.

This also challenged the editorial team's thoughts on its previous practitioner-oriented length restrictions and led to realisation that a benefit of the online publication format was that larger articles could be published. Although the remaining articles were internally peer reviewed, since the Makgill article was first submitted other articles have been sent to external, blind peer review (e.g., Thomas 2010 and Montgomery 2010). The Editor-in-Chief manages the external peer-review process at the request of the student editors primarily because he is more likely to know suitable researchers in the relevant fields who would be prepared to do the necessary review work or who may be more responsive to him than to student editors. Despite his involvement in this aspect the editorial board has gained a better appreciation of the mechanics and reasons for peer review through this direct experience.

Assessment

The assignment set for the students in the Professional Planning class was designed to provide a modest introduction to research and research publication. It required students to develop skills in researching and separating facts from opinion, clear identification of issues and in large part led to an appreciation of the need to triangulate and an appreciation of the difficulty of obtaining reliable data and information. These are all skills required of social science. In addition they had to engage precisely and accurately with the relevant planning documents and their content which is essential for planning research and practice.

The initial list of topics was based on media reports and planning gossip with the intention that the students would be able to elucidate the planning facts and provide a summary of the outcomes and reasons for them to the wider planning community. They were also required to conclude with a comment on the relevance of the issue to planners or planning theory more generally. This required them to use a number of research skills similar to those of investigative journalists, and take them beyond simple reportage.

The marking system was structured so that the students would receive individual feedback on their report and then be able to resubmit for grading that would sum to a five percent addition to their original grade. This was hoped to provide incentives for students to improve their almost publishable articles to fully publishable. In reality, it seemed that those who had done poorly, worked hard to submit improved, but not publishable, versions to try to lift their grades. Those who had done well on their first drafts did not feel the extra five percent was sufficient to do more than minor alterations and consequently also failed to lift their work to publication standard. In 2009, this approach was abandoned in favour of having a class discussion on each student's research as it progressed, and getting the class to contribute ideas on

how to improve the research further. This approach seemed beneficial and is being strengthened in 2010. The 2009 class was also required to each choose a book to review and the best of the reviews were subsequently submitted to the *LPR* content editors with four being published (Boyd 2010a, Coffey 2010a, Grose 2010 and Tulken 2010). This process was intended to strengthen the critical reading of relevant research literature and, through in-class discussion of the works they were reading, they were expected to broaden their general knowledge of the literature.

That the 2009 class found both the research and book review assignments valuable was confirmed through their comments on the independently administered student evaluations of the course. The 2008 class was less enthusiastic and generally produced lower quality work. The difference between the two years can partly be attributed to variations in the nature of the students in each year, partly to improvements in course management and teaching, but primarily to the provision of printed class sets of each of the first two issues of *LPR*. The students in 2009 appeared inspired by seeing the work of other students in print and wanted to reach that level themselves. Oral feedback suggests that publishing suddenly appeared more attainable and hard copies made it more tangible than the online version.

Students at other levels were also encouraged to write for *LPR*. Research related contributions included reports on conferences attended, summaries of graduate group planning research projects and co-authorship, with staff, of articles (e.g., Rennie & Lomax 2010). This included reviewing the range of staff research publications to provide a list of planning relevant staff publications (Rennie, Boyd and Swift 2009).

Consequently the editors had a wider range of possible articles to publish in the first issue in 2010 than had been expected, and a couple were held over to be considered for the subsequent issue (e.g., Thomas 2010). Students are now advised that achieving a publishable standard does not necessarily result in publication as the editors have to consider other factors (e.g., continued relevance).

Enhanced Performance

The students involved in editing and journal production are self-selected in that all students at the university were given the opportunity to be involved and no one who volunteered was rejected. The number of students in the third year course each year is small (12 or less).

Some from each group (volunteers and class) would almost certainly have progressed to research at the post-graduate level with or without the *LPR* experience and generalising from the experience to date needs to be treated with care. Based on individual student grades there is a considerable range in academic performance amongst those involved in *LPR*.

However, in 2010 the planning stream of the third year course (there are two other streams) performed so markedly better than the other streams in the exam that a moderator had to be used to confirm the performance had been fairly assessed. It may be no coincidence that six of the nine students in the planning stream had been involved in editing and producing both issues of the journal that year and two of them had been involved since the inception of the journal. It appeared they had a stronger understanding of core concepts of professional practice, or at least a better honed ability to express that than did students from other streams.

Moreover, each of the third year student articles required substantial post-course completion work by the students, usually working with considerable feedback from the editorial board. That seven undergraduates (Arnott 2009, Harris 2009, Hunt 2009, Boyd 2010c, Coffey 2010b, Garlick 2010, and Thomas 2010) completed this work voluntarily is testament to the effectiveness of using a publication as a means to incentivise their skill development. Four of these have continued to graduate study, two are working as planners and the other is travelling.

Spin-Off Benefits

This appears to have had significant spin-offs. Skills have been honed in administrative processes, copyright management, establishing peer review processes, finding content and building networks, developing processes for peer review, proof reading, referencing and publishing. Not only have the students been writing for the *LPR*, but it has led to a student culture more interested in publishing research. In 2010, six students had work published in the *Planning Quarterly*, one of which (Boyd 2010c) was a modified version of an article already published in the *LPR* (Boyd 2010a). The *LPR* experience also aided several of the undergraduate students, including second and third year, to gain summer scholarship employment as research assistants which is usually reserved for fourth year students. Another became lead author of a major externally funded research report (Lomax *et al.* 2010)).

Quality assurance has been a major learning process for the students involved in the editorial team. As noted, the third year student articles were not of a publishable standard and, for the first issue, the lecturer and graduate students worked with the authors to ensure the final versions were sound and

publishable. Although this was not a blind peer review process, the rigour with which the editorial team cross-checked the facts meant the final published articles were more accurate than some seen in more prestigious international journals. Perhaps the most significant learning for the students, however, came with the second issue in 2009. That issue was intended to feature staff research and some staff submitted material for publication. The students were somewhat stunned at the low level of proofing, style consistency and quality of writing in some of the material. The realisation that the eloquence of experienced researchers was something that they had to work hard to achieve came as something of a surprise (Blyth *et al.*, 2010).

Ethical Issues and Independence

The *LPR* has also raised a number of ethical issues for the students and the lecturer involved. These have been discussed by the editorial team and have been addressed through the operating policies developed.

For instance, the students in the professional planning course are not allowed to be involved in the *LPR* until their assignments have been marked. Lecturers are also not allowed to approach any student and ask them to become involved in *LPR* because of the power imbalances involved. Instead, after the initial call for volunteers to establish the first editorial team, all approaches to students are made by the students and the potential to be involved is advertised in *Cacklin'* (the Lincoln University Student Association magazine) by the student editors with themselves as the contact points. Students doing research for the articles as part of their university studies are bound by the University's codes of ethics. Approval under these can be a lengthy process, and consequently students are restricted in their articles to those matters that do not require ethical approval to investigate.

The *LPR* is not a formal Lincoln University publication, but one supported by the University (Rennie 2010). Formally, it is the journal of the LUPA, published on the LEaP website. This positioning has been sought by the students to ensure it maintains an independent editorial team and voice despite its Editor-in-Chief being a staff member and two of the three members of the Permanent Editorial Advisory Board being senior academic staff.

Managing Succession

Finally, succession planning and involving students from first year to graduate level is extremely important. The approach that has evolved is to introduce students into the editorial team through other students. Nothing is required of

them at the first meeting of the team. If they remain interested they are provided with a fairly simple task in their first issue to help them build confidence, understand the work level required and allow them to demonstrate their responsibility and have something tangible to show. All members of the team receive a hard copy which is now presented at an official, but informal, launch to celebrate the completion of each volume. Later, depending on aptitude and interest they may take on more specialised roles.

Each content editor is expected to spend two issues on the editorial board, but these should be overlapping rather than concurrent terms. It is early days, but this succession path seems to work as intended, to ensure that the content editors understand the importance of having high quality copy passed to the production team. A post-production (distribution) role has also emerged as important, as has the need for a convenor to facilitate the meetings of the editorial team, an archivist and a cartographer.

Impact

There are many scholarly academic journals published by universities and most involve students to some degree. In New Zealand, however, the development of a journal in a planning programme is unique. It has been established specifically as a teaching tool, to develop professional planning skills, camaraderie and a sense of identity within the planning student body and staff, an outreach mechanism and a means of promoting Lincoln's research. In these goals it has succeeded.

The editors have received very positive feedback from the profession and academia, both in New Zealand and overseas. Readership is now estimated at around the 500 mark, careers advisors at schools have asked to be placed on the mailing list to show *LPR* to their students, and two articles published in it have been republished in the *Planning Quarterly*. Members of the editorial team for the first 2010 issue have also written a reflective comment published in *Planning Quarterly* (Blyth *et al.*, 2010) A DVD containing the first three issues of *LPR* was distributed to 700 participants at the 2010 joint conference of the planning institutes of Australia and New Zealand by the University's marketing department. Makgill's (2010) article on water law was distributed to 400 participants at the 2010 Resource Management Law Association conference by a law firm at no cost to the University. Students are also taking articles they have had published to job interviews as samples of their work. The 2008 NZPI review reported favourably on the student body coherence, student staff relationships, the role of LUPA in this process, and the (then) impending *LPR*.

That *LPR* would also develop into a journal publishing externally blind-peer reviewed research was not initially certain, but has eventuated. More importantly, placing students largely in charge of the editorial and production processes has meant that they have gained a multi-layered appreciation of the processes of research publication – from copyright issues to critical peer review and proofreading. That the editorial team involves students from first year to PhD means a cross-year research and publishing culture appears to be developing. The initial scepticism of some staff and administrators has dissolved as they have seen the energy and enthusiasm of the students, the quality of the product, the skills being developed by the students and the positive external recognition and involvement. The staff involved can include it as part of their contribution to the research environment, which aids in promotion and in the national research assessment. At least one academic has noted that the experience in working with the students on *LPR* has led him to be more proactive in working with students to publish than previously.

It is important to note, however, that the *LPR* has been an outcome of particular situational synergies that might not be easily replicated. These include: the impending review by the professional accreditation body following a negative comment in a preceding report, the advent of a new lecturer prepared to sacrifice personal research time, the concurrent establishment of a student driven planning organisation as an independent home for the journal and a new, eager to make a mark, research centre with capacity to host an online journal. It is also important to recognise the considerable extra-curricular time commitment for the entirely voluntary input of the students involved in *LPR* and that two or three in particular were prepared and had the capacity to spend considerable time on the project in the early stages of its development. This enabled the journal to survive even when employment or other personal issues meant that key students were unavailable for extensive periods.

Reflections on LPR's role in learning

The lack of processes for formative feedback at undergraduate level between tutors and students has been noted as contributing to a lack of development of writing skills necessary for researchers (Aitchison 2009). Others have drawn attention to the need to develop learning communities (Muldoon and Macdonald 2009), collaborative (reciprocal) peer processes (Boud and Lee 2005, Larcombe *et al.*, 2007) and reflexive situated learning opportunities (Jawitz 2009, Sletto 2010).

As someone who has taught several of the students I have been surprised at the degree to which their overall writing standards and motivation, personal organisation and confidence increased through their involvement. One or two have achieved academically well-beyond the levels I thought they could and have developed skills that enable them to perform tasks I was not initially comfortable they should. Reflecting on why this occurred has led to recognition that students developed learning communities, using collaborative peer-learning processes and have taken advantage of the real world experiential learning opportunity *LPR* has provided. This is apparent in a number of ways.

The *LPR* provides an educational space for formative feedback and engagement between graduate students and staff to bring undergraduate authors to a publishable standard. In doing so, it has established a pedagogic environment of peer learning that cuts across the problematic traditional concepts of undergraduate peers as particular cohorts or at the same learning stage that has been critiqued by Boud and Lee (2005). The *LPR* peers are supported as extending from first year to experienced academics. Critical aspects of learning communities, such as sharing concerns, developing trust and a sense of belonging (Muldoon and Macdonald 2009), are evident in the relationships of the students and their focus on ethical issues and how they create pathways for newcomers. This demonstrates a sense of caring for each other and for what they are about as a community.

LPR's electronic publishing format has also provided students with direct access to the prepublication processes that Harnad (1990) envisaged would be so important. This has been through use of a shared intranet and the ease of electronic file sharing and software tools such as 'Track changes'. At the same time the journal format maintains the four chief functions (dissemination of information, quality control, canonical archive and recognition of authors (Rowland 1997, Harnad 1997)) that developing researchers need to understand. Their critical appreciation of these has been enhanced through 'discovering' the hierarchy of journals and the associated importance of peer review, the difficulty of gaining funds and in-kind contributions from sections of the University, and conflicts over University 'branding' and editorial independence at several levels.

Finally, but perhaps most important, the *LPR* and its publication deadlines, provides what Morss and Murray (2001, 48) describe as "a framework that puts writing for publication in real time and space". This enables students to focus their skills and deliver, and through this they gain the confidence to undertake and publish more research.

Conclusion

Further research on student motivations and experiential learning through involvement in *LPR* is underway, but this case study has demonstrated the potential of publishing a professional practice-oriented journal as a means for developing teaching-research linkages. Moreover, the journal has provided the students with a more rounded, critical appreciation of the research publication process than do traditional teaching-to-research pathways. This does come with its cost in time and energy, both for staff and students. It may not be an area that a university will sink resources into and consequently proponents may need to rely on considerable extra-curricular time commitments. Ethical issues need to be carefully considered. It must also be emphasised that there were several unusual situational features that facilitated the development of the *LPR*. Whether similar mixes of circumstances are necessary, or just sufficient, for the establishment of a journal such as *LPR* is not known and is an avenue for future research.

In conclusion, although still in relatively early days, it appears the *LPR* is well-grounded and is already providing avenues to develop student enthusiasm to produce and publish research. It has achieved this through providing a real world framework around which has developed a learning community of peers that cuts across the many layers of academia, linking undergraduates with graduates, staff, external research producers, professionals, schools and end-users. It is a model that we encourage others to explore.

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