

# Editorial

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## **Abstract**

This editorial piece is a reflection on my role as the Student Journal Editor at the University of Essex from September 2022 until September 2023.

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As a student and a researcher, there are many transferable, valuable skills we want to acquire during our education journey. One of them includes developing a flair for writing academically. Any form of writing an academic paper requires a methodical approach from planning, drafting, writing, and multiple revisions until submission. It takes time and a number of iterations to produce a quality output, more so if it is for a publication. In a nutshell, the mental and physical process of writing is demanding, even for an experienced author. As the editor of the Essex Student Journal for 2022/2023, I have been on the other side of the field: from reading, assessing, and overseeing the process until a paper is published. In this editorial piece, I will share my experience, lessons learned, skills acquired, and various interactions working as an editor for the past 12 months.

## ***Editor, authors, and reviewers***

Getting first-hand experience in the publishing process has been an educational journey for me. It has been pleasant to read submissions from different disciplines by our authors. To me, a piece of writing is not just about synthesising facts into structured paragraphs, but a written paper also showcases the author's writing style, voice, and analytical thought process. I have been amazed and even blown away by some of the submissions we received this year. The carefully written papers, easy-to-follow flow in the writing, meticulous revision by the authors, and the detailed, critical, yet constructive feedback by the reviewers all contribute to producing high-quality publications. Authors are both undergraduate and master's students, which demonstrates that having exceptional

writing skills can be developed at an early stage in a researcher's career. Being closely involved in the whole process has taught me how to polish a written paper and transform it from good to excellent, which I have emulated in my own writing style.

Another aspect of my editorial role comprises advocating and promoting the journal. We have seen an increased awareness of the student journal, as proven by this year's significant increase in submission. I had fun engaging with both students and academics alike, to share about the student journal and publication. The University of Essex is among the very few universities that has its own student journal, and this is a unique value for students at all levels. Undergraduates and masters' students use this fantastic platform to publish their laborious works, while PhD students grab the opportunity to gain peer reviewing experience as they build their profiles as early career researchers. The journal's tagline "*by students, for students*" illustrates that running a student journal can get students involved to ensure that publication (which is seen as a currency in academia) operates in a manner where all students benefit from the publication system.

From my interesting conversations with the students, the majority found that having the option to publish their master's dissertation or even a case study from their class module is such a huge advantage, especially for undergraduates who are planning to continue to postgraduate level.

I am thrilled with the article submissions we received during my tenure as it is the highest number, 26 submissions in total. We also initiated a special issue for the publication this year touching on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion.

### ***What being an editor during my PhD taught me***

My research journey has been colourful, as I completed my undergraduate in engineering then jumped into education, and I am now doing psychology for my PhD. I have always been fascinated by different subjects in life including economics, health sciences, and religion and spirituality, among others. Being an editor provided me with the opportunities to read, learn and understand topics in different disciplines. This year, we have garnered interest from students wanting to publish their academic work and have opened an additional type of submission which is an academic blog post.

Reading about the [risk and return of cryptocurrencies](#) (Grew, 2023) during the 2022 crypto crash was impeccable timing. Economics publications on the [global labour share of income](#) (Soriano Mena, 2023) and [theories explaining the central bank's behaviour](#) (De Rogatis, 2023) opened my eyes to the capitalist world that we live in. I enjoyed reading the critical reflection on the [author's personal journey from being a strict military instructor to a learning facilitator](#) (Everiss, 2023), a vulnerable piece of writing on transforming a preceding authoritarian teaching style to one that prioritises students' academic success and well-being. As someone intrigued by geopolitics but far from being knowledgeable, the publication "[Should we support international military intervention to prevent oppression](#)" (Apine, 2023) enlightened me on the different opinions of what constitutes a military intervention - even before deciding if the intervention was necessary or uncalled for. Essays on "[Why is cancer so hard to cure?](#)" (Wheeler, 2023) and "[Huntington's Disorder](#)" (Wheeler, 2023) are important areas that contribute to scientific research in health.

In short, reading, revising and editing academic papers from various fields not only taught me new knowledge but also pushed me to exit my comfort zone in trying to understand a subject that might be challenging or new territory for me.

Additionally, it is worth mentioning that the [PhD Support class](#) (Skills for Success, no date) run by Skills for Success, where students peer review fellow PhDs' papers, taught me to become a better writer and editor. I learned how not to complicate writing by using simple and clear sentences, how to create a better flow in writing by having your readers in mind, and learned the importance of being clear on the objective of the writing (e.g.: what do you want your reader to understand from the section). It also taught me how to avoid being purely descriptive in your literature review, and instead to synthesise the information and paraphrase into your own words based on your understanding to form a succinct, concise narrative.

While there are many skills I have attained from my role, there are a few that are distinguished. First, increased attentiveness by having an eagle eye to spot small formatting mistakes that can hugely impact the understandability of a sentence. Second, sharpened verbal and written communication having interacted with authors, and reviewers regarding the publication and advocating the journal to the students. Third, gained publishing experience from managing the backend of the system all the way until a paper is published and has its own DOI and [licence](#) (Essex Student Journal, 2022).

Needless to say, as much as I have contributed my knowledge and expertise in my editorial role, I have equally gained a lot of experiences and added value that have enhanced my research skills in my academic journey.

### ***Other Thoughts***

The Academic and Research Support team in the library has been remarkable in their guidance, assistance and support in my role. They welcome new ideas and foster both professional and personal development for me. The supportive working environment and the friendly team members made my experience even more memorable. The people, environment, and accessibility to the wealth of knowledge will definitely be something I will sorely miss, apart from the editorial role of publishing students' papers.

During my editorial role, there has been a rise of, and massive attention on, various AI tools, especially since the release of ChatGPT in November 2022. Therefore, I feel it is relevant for me to touch on this subject. As smart researchers and students, I believe that we need to stay abreast with technologies and utilise these AI tools ethically in our writing and research. AI can be used as a means to advance and find connections in our literature search, but not to produce an end product purely using AI. The intellectual inquiry such as developing the research question and integrating the scholarly debate still needs to come from the researcher, but using AI as a tool to expedite and widen the process.

### ***Final Word: Take home message***

I passionately encourage undergraduate and master's students to grab this opportunity to publish their hard work in the student journal. All those hours searching, analysing and putting together an important subject into writing should be acknowledged and celebrated through publication. It is through publication that our work will be visible to a much wider audience, including the mass public, media, and even experts in the subject. It is a terrific way to build your network and become an advocate on a topic that you are passionate about.

I believe access to scientific knowledge should not be a privilege and exclusive to students and academics within higher education. I strongly concur that [open access publication](#) (Library & Cultural Services, 2023) should be widely practised, especially when publishing students'

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exceptional work. I am proud that my editorial role has contributed to publishing more papers in open access as the Essex Student Journal operates on a [diamond open access](#) (Library & Cultural Services, 2022) basis.

Wrapping up, I am feeling a whirlwind of emotions writing this editorial. I had a terrific, fun, learning experience, but it's time to say goodbye to a role that I have been in for a year. This is not to say that my work as an editor has closed its chapter, but it has come to a final destination at the Essex Student Journal. I plan to continue contributing to the publication field, even later after I have completed my PhD. I am humbled to be selected as the editor for 2022/2023, appreciative of all the people I've learned from including authors, reviewers, and colleagues, and wish my warmest regards to the prospective editors as the journal grows to become more popular, established and sought-after by students at the University of Essex.

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