Editorial

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This fourth issue of Diffusion, the second in Volume 2, includes seven undergraduate research articles from across the University of Central Lancashire. Again, we have a strong input from Literature, Law and Psychology. From Literature there are two critiques on aspects of race and gender in Renaissance texts, from the Lancashire Law School there is an in depth analysis of Review Proceedings regarding ‘Standing’ the right to bring an action in European Law, and from Psychology a comparative study of methods used in constructing facial composites for police enquiry. This issue also includes two interesting case studies from Sports Science: one which tests the advantages and potential risks of a new type of running shoe against a conventional running shoe and the other which assesses the effects of caffeine on upper body exercise. But we open this issue with an excellent research paper on ‘Memory Clinics’ from a student in Nursing and Caring Sciences, produced in only her second year of study. The high quality of all these contributions is further evidence of the outstanding achievements of the University’s undergraduate community and the increasing significance of research at this level.

Additionally, I am delighted to point out that we now have a greater number of students who are involved in producing the journal itself: four more students on the Editorial Team and a substantial increase in the number of students who are Second Readers within their specialist subject areas. As previously mentioned (Editorial 2:1), contributing as a Second Reader to the journal helps develop critical reading skills. But, having recruited more Student Readers for this issue, I’d like to expand this observation a little further, so that prospective student Readers may understand more of what is involved and the benefits of that involvement.

Readers of any journal have a responsibility to both the Contributor and the Editor as they read and comment on a given submission. In the case of Diffusion, the First Readers are all members of the academic staff who recommend submissions to the Editorial Team. The Second Reader becomes involved once an article has been conditionally accepted and his/her role is to identify any minor errors or amendments deemed necessary to improve the content, the general structure
and coherence of the piece, including clarity of expression. These Second Readers obviously need to be familiar with the subject area of the article, in order to appreciate the academic content, but they are also asked to consider the article from the point of view of a wider student audience, to consider whether it is reasonably accessible to students outside the specialist field. As these Second Readers become more experienced, they may also take note of copy-editing details such as house style – whether changes need to be made in terms of presentation to conform to the standard format we stipulate for Diffusion, particularly where variations exist between the discipline and the house style for referencing and bibliography.

As I’m sure those students who have already become involved in this process will agree, the act of critically reading another student’s work is a very valuable exercise. This is partly because it alerts the Reader to the importance of proof reading itself. All too often when submitting a piece of coursework this final stage is carried out in haste or neglected altogether, and some seemingly trivial faults can seriously mar the overall quality of the work. Careful reading of undergraduate submissions also helps the Reader to recognise the importance of structure and clarity, making these students more aware of this when presenting their own written assignments. Additionally, of course, any form of critical engagement with a text helps to develop analytical skills, not least in terms of an intellectual and interrogative engagement with the subject matter itself. Second Readers for Diffusion are therefore not only providing a valuable service which benefits the journal, the process also helps to improve their own critical awareness and presentation skills.

In describing this pre-publication stage, I hope that readers of Diffusion will be more aware, not only of the additional work which goes into publishing a collection of research articles, but of the ways in which UCLan’s students can benefit from the journal and become involved in learning through publication and research.

Finally, I should once more like to express my gratitude to members of the Editorial Team, to the First Readers who recommended the articles in this issue, and to the Second Readers, many of whom are students themselves: thank you for your dedication to the journal and for your hard work in helping to prepare these papers for publication.