

Welcome to Advancing Scholarship and Research in Higher Education

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Abstract

Advancing Scholarship and Research in Higher Education (ASRHE) is a new journal focused on progressing learning and teaching in higher education by advancing scholarship and research. ASRHE is published by HERDSA as an open source journal under a Creative Commons licence. ASRHE features a group-based peer review process and introduces submission categories for research in progress and creative contributions.

Introduction

It is our pleasure to welcome you to the first issue of Advancing Scholarship and Research in Higher Education (ASRHE) with this editorial. The journal is now open for submissions and ready to fulfil its mission of progressing learning and teaching in higher education by advancing scholarship and research. While steeped in valuable traditions of academic publishing, ASRHE breaks new ground with a group-based peer review process, a *Research in Progress* article category, acceptance of creative articles and creation of new issues in anticipation of articles.

ASRHE is published by HERDSA as an open source journal under a Creative Commons licence. We are grateful for HERDSA's stewardship and the financial support provided. ASRHE complements HERDSA's long standing research journals RDHE and HERD. The role of RDHE is to publish selected articles presented at the annual HERDSA Conference and only accepts submissions linked to the conference.

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HERD is a highly respected and rated journal with a long tradition in serving the higher education research community. HERD has a wider focus than ASRHE that dedicates itself specifically to research related to learning and teaching and focuses on research and researcher development.

Peer review process

ASRHE applies a non-blind peer review process with reviewers working in collegial review groups. Preparing an article for a blind review process not only means suppressing author details but also limits what contextual information can be included. We believe that research articles on learning and teaching benefit from detailed context descriptions, identifying the discipline area, and outlining teaching settings and institutional contexts. The review group approach counteracts risks of bias. Our reviews are conducted as discussions, guided by review criteria, seeking input from all review group members. Our authors receive consensus editorial decisions that provide clear feedback and explicit revision requirements while still reflecting the diversity of viewpoints discussed. Authors are advised of the identities of the review group members as soon as they receive the review decisions.

An important aspect of using a group-based review process lies in the opportunities for collegial discussions, reviewer development and researcher growth. While reviewing and editorial work are traditionally solitary experiences, our review groups facilitate lively exchange and stimulating discussions. Our reviewers listen to arguments presented by others, present their views, learn and contribute. Working in groups of five to seven members draws on diverse and rich backgrounds, representing a spread of disciplines, research paradigms and experiences. The group approach means less experienced researchers can be involved with reviewing early in their research careers. This not only benefits their progress as researchers but also the field of journal publishing in developing skilled reviewers.

Article categories

ASRHE accepts submissions under the categories of *Research Complete* and *Research in Progress*. *Research Complete* articles report on research that makes a substantial contribution to knowledge. *Research in Progress* articles are situated at an earlier stage in the research journey and focus on disseminating and sharing the process and preliminary findings. Articles in this category will be well-grounded, e.g., outlining literature and theoretical foundations as well as approaches to data collection, but the research presented might not yet have collected enough evidence to support firm conclusions. We suggest that such articles will function as an invitation to other researchers to engage with research approaches and original authors, and lead to further publication as *Research in Progress* or as *Research Complete* in ASRHE or in other journals. We believe that this category will make an important contribution to the

fields of research on learning and teaching and scholarship, by connecting research and researchers, acknowledging the dynamic nature of these research areas, and highlighting what seems to work or fail in a timely fashion.

Article formats

Academic writing is a contested concept. Over time, with the impact of new ways of inquiring and innovations in technology, what is accepted as academic writing has changed. ASRHE welcomes innovative ways of writing. The traditions of academic writing are aligned with scientific method and have led to traditional article structures. We accept that those structures will not always be appropriate for new forms of inquiries and encourage authors to present their work in emerging formats. The affordances of publishing a journal electronically include reference to moving images or soundscapes, and other innovations in the presentation of an academic argument.

We recognise the challenges inherent in exploring new formats and have established editorial expectations regarding inquiry rigour and grounding the inquiry in established discourses. We invite authors to explore with us and help us shape the new formats. We ask our readers to be open-minded in considering new forms of presenting research.

Journal procedures

Starting a new electronically published journal allows us to diverge from print-based traditions. Instead of accumulating articles before publishing a new issue we open a new issue in anticipation of articles. This provides an immediate, permanent home for articles approved for publication and avoids the need for early release mechanisms. We will close issues at irregular time intervals based on the number of articles published, followed by immediately opening a new issue. This approach allows keeping traditions such as volume, issue and page numbers, while not introducing artificial publishing delays or temporary article identifiers.

A side-effect of our review process lies in reducing the number of stages in the review process at which delays can occur and provides more certainty around timelines for review decisions and publication. Like other journals, we screen to identify submissions out of alignment with the journal's brief or clearly in need of further work. From there, submissions are assigned to review group meetings, where discussions occur and decisions are reached. We strive to inform authors within two weeks of meetings. If changes are required that warrant further discussion by the whole review group, authors are encouraged to respond within four weeks so their revised article can be considered at the next scheduled meeting. We suggest that this approach will lead to predictable review times and clear lines of communication.

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Call to action

We are calling on members of HERDSA and the wider international research community to assist us in advancing higher education scholarship and research via contributing to ASRHE as readers, authors and reviewers. We welcome your feedback to assist us in shaping the journal. Let us work together on research-based responses to the increasing challenges faced by higher education teachers and researchers in these uncertain times.