Student Publication Venues

**Student-Dedicated Publication Venues and Guidelines: A Content Analysis**

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**NURSE AUTHOR & EDITOR, 2017, 27(2), 1**

**INTRODUCTION**

Nursing programs often require students to submit scholarly work for consideration for publication (Kennedy, Newland, & Owens, 2016). Such submissions are common at the graduate level in many disciplines. Anecdotal conversations with journal editors suggests that baccalaureate level nursing students also submit manuscripts for consideration. The increasing number of submissions can support the growth and variety of nursing knowledge, especially with the clinical knowledge gained from scholarly projects following the advent of the Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) degree. However, factors such as inexperience in scientific writing; insufficient faculty expertise to guide preparation of submissions; uncertain student commitment
to complete a rigorous process; and competition for publication space can challenge both students attempting to submit manuscripts and editors endeavoring to publish high-quality, scholarly articles (Kennedy et al., 2016).

There is also debate as to whether it is beneficial to provide student-dedicated venues. Such opportunities may theoretically promote successful early publication experiences as a basis for future work, but may also fail to adequately prepare students to meet the highest standard for publication. We searched for journals in nursing, healthcare, and non-health-related disciplines to determine whether or not student-dedicated venues exist and, if so, are there guidelines in place for student work? We defined student-dedicated venues as either a feature for student work within a journal or a standalone journal publishing student work. This article will compare and contrast student-dedicated publication venues from the three specialties of journals listed above and feature conclusions from a content analysis of student guidelines and anecdotal notes from conversations with nursing editors.

**PROJECT METHODS**

Four questions guided this project:

1. Of three categories, nursing, healthcare, and non-healthcare, which journals offer student-dedicated venues for publication?
2. Do non student-dedicated journals offer specific guidelines for students?
3. What disciplines require/encourage undergraduate scholarly publications?
4. What are pros and cons of dedicated student venues?

We conducted independent Internet searches using the keywords nursing+journal+student (+publication); healthcare (health care)+journal=student (=publication); and journal+student (+publication). We excluded any journal listed on Beall’s List of Predatory Publishers or Predatory Standalone Journals (Beall, 2017a; Beall, 2017b). The sample ($N = 21$) included student-dedicated
journals \( (N = 18) \) and standalone journals that included a specific student feature \( (N = 3) \). Also included in our data were non-identifiable written field notes from informal queries and anecdotal conversations with published authors and editors \( (N = 16) \).

The analysis team included two doctorally prepared researchers and a master’s prepared librarian. Content analysis was guided by the three categories of journals: nursing, healthcare, and non-healthcare; the presence of student specific instructions in either student-dedicated guidelines or specifically noted in general guidelines; and the categories of pro or con. Analysis included demographics, publication expectations, conclusions, and potential areas that might benefit from further discussion.

**FINDINGS**

Our first question considered journals that offer student-dedicated venues for publication. Our search revealed 11 university based options for student publications. A few of these were restricted to students enrolled at the sponsoring universities but most were open to any student submission. Two journals, the *Journal of Student Research* and *Anthrojournal*, are student-dedicated journals open to all college students but are not university affiliated. Table 1 presents information about journals included in the sample.

**Table 1. Journal Analysis \( (N = 21) \)**
In our analysis of journals and guidelines we noted that non student-dedicated journals required students to follow general author guidelines, but included brief paragraphs with additional student specific instructions. For example, one journal accepted student manuscripts, but delayed publication until the student graduated. We also evaluated each student-dedicated journal for criteria common to established journals, such as those in our standalone category. These included international standard serial number (ISSN), indexing, content options, review, author guidelines, acceptable languages, content delivery, and access. The demographic information is compiled in Table 2.
Table 2. Student-Dedicated Journal Demographics \((N = 18)\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ISSN</th>
<th>Indexed</th>
<th>Not indexed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>EBSCO (N = 3) (17%)</td>
<td>Ulrichweb Global Search Directory (N = 9) (50%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Content Options</td>
<td>Research Only (N = 3) (17%)</td>
<td>Research and Non Research Option (N = 15) (83%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specific IRB</td>
<td>Yes (N = 9) (50%)</td>
<td>No (N = 9) (50%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Requirement</td>
<td>Peer Review</td>
<td>Editorial/Faculty Sponsor Review Only (N = 3) (17%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Review</td>
<td>Yes (N = 13) (72%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No (N = 2) (11%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Author Guidelines</td>
<td>Brief &lt; 1 Page (N = 4) (22%)</td>
<td>Detailed &gt; 1 Page (N = 14) (78%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accept Language</td>
<td>Yes (N = 3) (17%)</td>
<td>No (N = 15) (83%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Than English</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Content Delivery</td>
<td>Online Only (N = 17) (94%)</td>
<td>Print Only (N = 1) (6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Both (N = 7) (39%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open Source/Access</td>
<td>Yes (N = 7) (39%)</td>
<td>No (N = 11) (61%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Another guiding question queried requirements in other disciplines for undergraduates to publish. We created two categories, healthcare and non-healthcare, to consider this question. Expectations in the disciplines of medicine, pharmacy, law, and physical therapy were at the graduate level only, but it is noteworthy that in these fields one needs a doctoral degree to practice. Expectations were also noted in mathematics, psychology, respiratory therapy, and social work at both the undergraduate and graduate levels. In sum, there was considerable expectation to publish at the undergraduate level in non-healthcare disciplines; there were also many opportunities in university-based journals created to support publication of student work.

Of the six nursing journals that offered venues for student publication, four were dedicated to student work only. The other two included either a section for student work or a separate area of the author guidelines that addressed student publications.

Analysis of author guidelines of the journals listed in Table 1 and anecdotal notes from conversations with nursing editors led to seven conclusions related to student publications:
1. Student publication venues are hard to find in nursing.

2. In our sample, over half of the student-dedicated venues (61%) are university-based and the majority of non-healthcare journals (88%) are multidisciplinary.

3. Many (83%) have multiple content options for submissions, such as research, essays, and letters to the editor.

4. Most student-dedicated journals (78%) have detailed guidelines available for students.

5. Many (67%) are indexed and half have an ISSN.

6. Half lack a specific IRB requirement for students to indicate review and approval of research studies, quality improvement projects, or other initiatives that involved participants.

7. Editors want to help, but lack sufficient time and express other concerns such as lack of rigor in student work to move forward with publication.

Nursing students seeking publication venues have limited options. While *Imprint*, the Journal of the National Student Nurses Association, is a dedicated journal for students, it is a professional magazine and not suitable for scholarly submissions appropriate to peer-reviewed journals (NSNA, 2017). This journal can provide a helpful introduction to the publication process at the undergraduate level. The remaining nursing journals may have usefulness to graduate-level students enrolled at a school that has a university-based journal or in a particular nursing specialty, such as informatics or nurse anesthesia.

The final guiding question explored pros and cons to student dedicated publication venues, both standalone and as a feature of a journal; several advantages and disadvantages were noted. Kennedy et al. (2016) acknowledged the importance of student publication opportunities and the willingness of editors to provide assistance, but also noted the need for faculty mentors to support students through the publication process. Student-dedicated publication venues can be appropriate to socialize undergraduate and graduate students into the publishing mindset.
Editor concerns may provide starting points for further discussions with faculty to arrive at the best solutions to encourage and support students as they pursue publication opportunities. Advantages noted by editors included the ability for a student-dedicated venue to provide additional resources and mentoring and demonstration of a clear welcome for student work. They noted that the level of author expertise is explicit and there is no misrepresentation – it is clearly a student publication. However, the example of the journal that delayed publication until graduation is of concern. Presumably this allows student authors to utilize their highest level credentials. This delay could negatively impact the immediacy of the content to readers.

Editors voiced concerns that adding student level publications may decrease journal readership, questioning whether or not practitioners will actually read and use this work. Noting that the goal of publication is to impact practice, editors asked if there is a sufficient quantity of student work rigorous enough to be considered at an impact ready level. Finally, nursing editors expressed a strong need to assure the same process of peer review and expectation of quality is maintained for all submissions.

**DISCUSSION/IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE**

Review and analysis of student-dedicated publication venues offered evidence that there are some options available for nursing students to consider, but also plenty of opportunities for new ideas and further discussion to support student efforts. We conclude with discussion of several implications for practice.

*Faculty/Editors:*

- Keep an open dialogue with students about publication. Students taking courses with a publication requirement need guidance to both select an appropriate venue and throughout the publication process. To increase the chance for success, it may be helpful to consider publications beyond nursing journals to include university sponsored opportunities. It is more important to
have a successful publication outcome to encourage future attempts than to be published in a discipline-specific journal.

- Faculty need to determine the actual student learning outcome appropriate to the student’s level of expertise and the resources available to help them in the publishing process. If publication is a goal, administrative support is necessary to assure faculty mentors with sufficient time and expertise to provide this help. Otherwise, the goal may need to be reconsidered in light of available resources.

- Editors can redirect students to more appropriate venues for their consideration. As an editor, you may know of a publication opportunity to share even if the student submission is not appropriate to your journal.

- Consider that time needed to pursue the publishing process may extend beyond a semester-long course. Help students to understand that achieving a quality publication typically requires many revisions. Work with students to assess their motivation for publication and commitment to a process that will likely extend beyond graduation.

**Students:**

- Search for student publication venues both in and outside of nursing. If you meet the qualifications for student-dedicated journals, consider submitting your work. Healthcare related journals outside of nursing and non-healthcare related journal sponsored by universities that publish student work from many disciplines may be appropriate. Considering these journals may increase your chance for successful publication.

- Select a written feature appropriate to your level of expertise in both nursing and writing. You might have more success with publication by offering a well composed and referenced letter to the editor before attempting to write a research report. If you are writing an opinion piece, be sure that your journal of choice includes this type of feature. Many scholarly journals do not; however, student dedicated venues, regional publications, and organizational newsletters can be options for this type of submission, allowing you to begin learning about the publication process.
• Be honest with yourself about the quality of your work, if you are reporting on a project or research study. A local quality improvement project with a very small sample may not meet the standards of research reporting and reader interest. Consider re-focusing the article to emphasize a strength of your project, such as a case study or review that can add to the clinical literature. A publication ready submission will look very different from the scholarly student paper submitted to complete a capstone project or dissertation.

CONCLUSION

The process of synthesizing and disseminating scholarly work is an important part of student growth. Success in publication offers great satisfaction at the individual level, and contributes to the body of knowledge in the nursing profession. It is important to help students learn about the publication process and to provide guidance as they proceed from creating a written product for potential publication. Publication venues such as student-dedicated journals or journal features are one way to introduce students to scholarly publication and generate excitement about sharing knowledge in the literature throughout their nursing career.

REFERENCES


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*NAE 2017 27 2 1 Owens*

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