

# Undergraduate Research News Australasia

Australasian Council for Undergraduate Research – Issue 21 • May 2022

## Editorial

**The May issue of URNA in front of you is a compilation of exciting research insights and event announcements.**

It reports on recent research conducted by ACUR Executive and Steering Committee members, showcases research conducted by students, and importantly announces the ACUR2022@USYD conference in September 28-30.

We share two research studies undertaken by Liam (UoW) and Isabelle (ACU). Given Australia's recent extreme weather conditions Liam's investigation into more efficient stormwater treatment seems more pertinent than ever, while Isabelle's powerful research essay makes a

strong case for empowering self-determination among Indigenous research participants.

A large section of this issue reports on the findings of various studies conducted by ACUR members. Olivia shares preliminary findings from evaluating the submissions and experiences of the inaugural Great UG Writing Project which was carried out in 2020. She shares her fascination of the many ways participants reported their personal COVID-19 experience and impact on their research. Denise reports on the value of the ACUR conference: Why do UGR students attend and what do they gain from it? Next, Rachel outlines ACUR's recent connections and invites similar

organisations to get in touch. Then, I present a summary of the Honours research examining the question "How do we assess UGR?" before Angela and I share recent publications on Australasia's advancement of undergraduate research as well as the underlying philosophy of undergraduate research. Finally, it is with great excitement that we announce the next and 10th ACUR conference to take place at The University of Sydney in 2022 and the team organising it. Make a cuppa and enjoy the read.

**Dr Lilia Mantai**  
**The University of Sydney**

## “It's everyone's responsibility” - Changing behaviour of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women

**Isabelle recently graduated with a Bachelor of Creative Arts and shares her research essay on behaviour change initiatives for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women in the City of Darebin region.**

“Regardless of previous government and community-led anti-violence initiatives, violence against women remains an urgent national priority, with at least one woman killed every week in Australia by a current or former partner.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women experience disproportionate rates of violence when compared to the general population, being 45 times more likely to experience family violence in their lifetime, 32 times more likely to become hospitalised as a result, and 11 times more likely to die from inflicted violence than non-Indigenous women. Current statistics show the greatest severity of abuse to be experienced by 25-34-year-old females.

The perpetration of violence against women is largely a result of rigid gender roles and unequal power relations - yet, for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, it is also consequential of previous and ongoing impacts of colonisation. It is important to note that violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women is not a part of traditional culture. For this group, violence is often more severe and complex in its impacts than for non-Indigenous women, and often manifests as an intersectional concern that overlaps with many other aspects of disadvantage.

While a number of anti-violence initiatives have recorded positive improvements in community and individual attitudes over recent years, there has been no evidence of significant reductions in violent behaviours against Indigenous Australian individuals in the past decade.

Studies have revealed that Indigenous Australian individuals avoided the use of services due to feelings of intimidation when

stepping outside of their comfort zone; low levels of confidence and motivation; fears of failure, rejection and shame toward accessing health and wellbeing-related support. Social and cultural pressures to maintain community kinship ties and loyalties perpetuate shared fears of peer or kinship reprisal from the emotional, spiritual and cultural effects of incarcerations on Indigenous culture, as well as low levels of trust and confidence in mainstream providers and authorities to ensure safety.

One significant barrier in help-seeking is community scepticism about 'seagull' research or support efforts conducted by non-Indigenous individuals or entities. The placement of

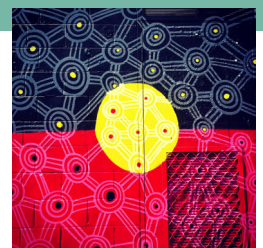
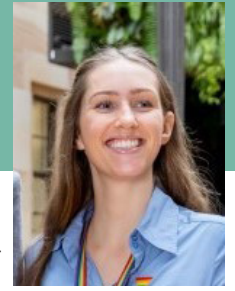


Photo by [Paul Stuart McLean](#) on [Unsplash](#)

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# Researching research - The Great Undergraduate Writing Project



**We asked you how COVID-19 impacted your research field. The answers were mixed, and told many different tales.**

COVID-19 obviously impacted everyone differently, it wasn't until reviewing the responses to the ACUR Great Writing Project that I realised just how far individual experiences of the research environment varied.

Initially the competition was conceptualised as a way to offer an online platform to engage with research. Undergraduate research is important not only to facilitate connections for further research, but also develop individual researcher identities. This project challenged people to think abstractly about the research environments and themselves within that context. Once the submissions were reviewed, it was clear that entrants had demonstrated some insightful commentary on the nature of research amidst international turmoil.

There was an overwhelming underlying theme of an increased strain on mental health, mentioned in entrants from all fields. However, beyond that there were 3 main themes: accessibility, engagement, and the nature of tasks performed as part of

research. As you can imagine, accessibility had been completely hampered for some, and overwhelmingly increased for others. People in different disciplines, for example performing fieldwork, were suddenly presented with barriers of capacity, limited social interactions, and physical barriers of travel. However, on the flipside, some students found themselves suddenly joined in the online world by the rest of the student population. Students who were confined to online platforms suddenly had more students joining their forums, and were able to access academic discussions that previously weren't available to them. International collaboration was suddenly much more feasible and common. Engagement for some was thus improved, however, for others it was stifled by a global preoccupation with individual health. Lastly, the nature of tasks performed as a part of research were transformed. Innovative methods of research had to be developed promptly. In this regard, undergraduate research was suddenly at the same level as postgraduate- and career research. No longer did new researchers have to learn old methods, but we were alongside the old-timers innovating alongside them. Backyard research, digital

methods, and more efficient processes (for example, when access to research facilities was restricted) were developed.

Angela, Lilia and I presented the preliminary results of this research at the Society for Research into Higher Education Conference in December 2021, see here <https://srhe.ac.uk/international-conference-2021/>.

A journal article is in progress.

I hope that reviewing these answers will provide a deeper understanding of undergraduate research in a dynamic environment. It's been great to get involved in this project, and personally it's been interesting from my background in genomics and data science work to think more abstractly from a social sciences and qualitative point of view. I'm very grateful, and I'd recommend anyone to step out of their discipline/comfort zone to view research more abstractly.

**Olivia Jessop**  
University of Queensland

## How is Undergraduate Research assessed?

**While there is growing research focused on undergraduate research and the role of assessment in higher education independently, how undergraduate research is assessed is not well understood.**

This is surprising given that assessment essentially determines learning behaviour and where and what students decide to spend their time and energy on. Lots of the research activities we support and promote at ACUR occur as part of the undergraduate coursework, and hence, get marked and graded. The process and goals of research activities differ, however.

So we wanted to find out what current practice in the assessment of undergraduate research looks like. To find out, in 2021, Angela and I worked with a dedicated Honours student at Deakin University, Christopher Swain, and his supervisor and our colleague Professor Margaret Bearman.

Collaboratively we designed a scoping study to reveal how undergraduate research is assessed,

whether it happens in coursework or as an extracurricular activity. Chris' thesis reports on the current and best practice assessment strategies at universities in Australia and New Zealand across 17 disciplines. Chris conducted a mixed-methods study involving 54 survey responses and 4 interviews with academics who engage in best practice. This study explores what gets assessed and how, the main purpose of assessment, what drives UGR assessment, and what criteria are used.

The findings provided interesting insights.

While academics adopt traditional assessment methods these do not actually fully fit the purpose or goals of the research activity conducted. Colleagues engaged in undergraduate research are much more interested in the development of their students as researchers and their development of research skills and capacity than grading the outputs, e.g. research proposal and reports.

Academics often go the extra mile to provide developmental feedback along the way to nurture inquiry-based learning and critical thinking. They even connect motivated students with relevant academic and professional networks to present a potential platform to kickstart a researcher career.

Such investment of energy and time is under-recognised by the institutions but needs to be acknowledged and rewarded if we want students to have positive research experiences that might eventuate in research careers and if we want staff to sustain their commitment to advancing undergraduate research.

The paper reporting on this study will be submitted to a leading Higher Education journal and we will update you on the final publication.

**Dr Lilia Mantai**  
The University of Sydney Business School

# “ACUR opened up the possibility and the world of research to me”

## **We present the preliminary findings from an evaluation of the impact of the Australasian Council for Undergraduate Research (ACUR) conference and related events on student learning outcomes and future research aspirations.**

Research evidence demonstrates the positive impact that participation in research in the undergraduate curriculum can have on students' confidence in their ability to undertake research, critical thinking skills, problem solving and understanding the role of research in their profession. Ideas about an inquiry-centred undergraduate student experience and how to nurture and foster it meet the needs within the Australian workforce for critical creative thinkers; people who can solve problems that we currently cannot contemplate; for skills and abilities to gather and evaluate evidence; in short, the skills of inquiry. With this in mind, the Australasian Conferences of Undergraduate Research were established in 2012.

ACUR Conferences provide undergraduates with the opportunity to gain confidence in their ability to communicate their research to a broader audience outside their university, gain insights from the research undertaken by students across a range of disciplines and build networks. Moreover, participation as student members of the Australian Council for Undergraduate Research affords students the opportunity to maintain research networks and participate in a range of other activities such as research colloquia and Posters in Parliament events.

To date, approximately 900 undergraduates have presented their research at annual ACUR conferences and a third of Australasian universities have joined the Council as institutional members. Current research undertaken by Professor Denise Wood AM (University of the Sunshine Coast), Professor Angela Brew (Macquarie University) and Dr Lilia Mantai (The University of Sydney) is investigating the impact of these conferences and related ACUR events on student learning and their subsequent research and career pathways.

The findings from this research will contribute to understanding the impact of undergraduate research on the future research aspirations of undergraduates and their careers. It will also identify ways in which ACUR and ACUR conferences can better support undergraduate research pathways in the future.

The project addresses the following research questions:

1. What was the motivation for students to attend and/or present at the ACUR conference?
2. What is the experience of students who have participated in ACUR events such as the ACUR conference?
3. What (if any) were the benefits for students attending ACUR events?
4. What could be improved for future ACUR conferences and related events?
5. What is the impact of participation in ACUR conferences and related events on student learning outcomes, research aspirations and career goals?

The research received Human Research Ethics approval prior to commencement. Current and former students who have attended an ACUR event since ACUR was established were invited via email distributed by ACUR to complete an anonymous online survey created using Qualtrics. The survey includes a mix of check box, Likert-Scale and open-ended text responses and analysis includes thematic analysis of themes emerging from open-ended responses. The target sample size is at least 50 participants; to date, 13 participants have responded. Of those students, four students had attended more than one ACUR conference with the remainder attending one conference. Respondents received so far are from students who attended ACUR conferences hosted by Macquarie University (2012 and 2013); Australian National University (2014); The University of Western Australia (2015); Central Queensland University (2016); The University of Adelaide (2017); La Trobe University (2018); Newcastle University (2019). The conference was not held in 2020 due to the impact of the pandemic and to date, no responses have been received from students attending the most recent conference held in 2021.

Most students who responded were in their fourth year (30.8%), Honours year (23.1%) or

third year (23.1%) when they attended their first ACUR conference, with two students attending their first ACUR conference in their first year or second year. The majority of students presented a paper and/or attended presentations by other students (28.6% respectively) with the remaining students reporting that they presented a poster (14.3%); attended a poster session (14.3%) and/or attended formal ACUR functions (14.3%).

Students were invited to rate their experiences at the ACUR conferences they have attended on a scale of one to five (where one is poor and five is outstanding). The Table below shows student responses to their experiences at the first ACUR conference they attended. As Table one shows, students were positive about their overall experience, rating that item at 4.23.

Students reported that their motivation to attend the conference arose out of their interest in gaining research experience and academic skills, the opportunity to share their research with other undergraduates and develop their presentation skills, and to “participate in a conference of like-minded students, to hear new ideas, meet new people and talk about a topic I was extremely passionate about”. One respondent also noted that conference provided a means for exploring postgraduate research pathways. Other students were motivated by the opportunity to travel and have fun!

Many students commented that presenting at the ACUR conference enabled them to “practice presentation skills and finesse ... public speaking”, helped them to “learn how to communicate complex ideas more succinctly” and to gain confidence for future presentations (for example at Honours or postgraduate levels). One student commented that the conference “opened my eyes to potential research topics in my field of study” noting that “this will be useful to me when undertaking independent research at the postgraduate level”. Another student stated that their attendance at





ACUR enabled them to learn about “other undergraduate researchers and their research, getting better understanding about the current state of certain fields” and to learn “some presentation skills from outstanding performance of others, which have been useful to my own presentations”. Another former ACUR attendee noted the experience at their first conference was “very impactful” leading them to present their research at a subsequent ACUR conference where they won an award for best presentation. This student summed up the benefits of undergraduate research and attendance at ACUR conferences, stating that “The whole experience of research (designing, analysing, writing, presenting, socialising) was stimulating, fun, and something I was quite good at!” This student reported that the experience prompted the decision to pursue a Master by research and then a PhD.

The impact of undergraduate research and attendance at ACUR on future research pathways is a common theme reflected in student responses. Several students noted that the experience confirmed their goal to pursue future research pathways including higher

degrees by research study and research careers. As one student shared:

*I am currently a Postdoctoral Research Fellow at the Australian Institute of Health Innovation. ACUR opened up the possibility and the world of research to me. It was a great, low-risk way of getting comfortable with conferences, networking, presentations and such, which could otherwise be quite intimidating! It was one of the key starting points to launching my academic/research trajectory, and I am very thankful for the experience and opportunities!*

More than half of the respondents reported that they had published papers since attending ACUR (53.9%), with 30.8% of students having presented papers or posters at other conferences. Almost half of the respondents also reported their undergraduate research has been used in other contexts (46.2%) including publications, with three students reporting that they had also received opportunities to pursue paid research since the conference they attended.

In summarising the best things about ACUR, respondents commented on the opportunities

ACUR provides for engaging in research including publications, observing research and academia in action, meeting other like-minded students and hearing about their research as well as engaging with students from diverse backgrounds, travel and engaging socially. As one student shared, “As original undergraduate research is the focus of this conference, I really felt like I was a part of the conversation! Hearing all of the original ideas from the different disciplines was also very inspiring”.

All of the students responding to the survey agreed that academics should include more undergraduate research in the curriculum. The benefits of undertaking research in the undergraduate curriculum are captured in one student’s response who shared that undergraduate research enables “students to creatively utilise their learning and skills to contribute to the field” noting that “if we need professionals that are experts in the on-ground requirements of society, we need to emphasise research at the undergraduate level”.

**Denise Wood**  
University of Sunshine Coast

## Stormwater treatment

**In the urban world, the natural landscape has been greatly modified with development resulting in large proportions of impervious area.**

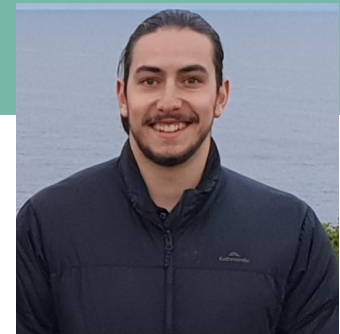
Stormwater run-off from these developed lands intercept and collect a variety of potential pollutants, which without treatment, will enter our waterways. This has negative impacts on water body health, as well as on plant and animals within the polluted habitat.

I completed my Honours thesis to satisfy my Bachelor of Environmental Engineering (Honours) degree in stormwater quality management. Specifically implementing the industry standard stormwater quality treatment modelling software: MUSIC. I was lucky enough to be provided access to this software to complete my thesis work with the support of the managing company eWater. My thesis topic specifically investigated the differences in stormwater pollutant treatment requirements between different council area within Australia, including drinking water catchment areas using

MUSIC. This topic came about due to part-time work I was completing as a consultant for a local company and discussion with my employer.

My aim in the thesis was to obtain skills in using MUSIC for stormwater treatment modelling as well as to provide some technical insight and differing impacts on stormwater treatment devices resulting from different pollutant reduction targets. As such, I proposed a development to be modelled within different areas, using rainfall data from the specific areas. The stormwater treatment train simply contained a rainwater tank, gross pollutant trap and a bioretention basin. The bioretention basin was the variable treatment device which was edited between each scenario run. The impact of the reduction targets was observed by the changes to the required bioretention basin area to satisfy each pollutant reduction target.

My thesis resulted in a general overview of some of the impacts that pollutant reduction



targets have on a required treatment train, however the model is highly complex with many variables considered. The conclusions I made may only apply to the specific development and site constraints I proposed. I found that more work could be completed into this topic, with a focus on specific attributes of a design to greater determine the impacts that the targets have on required treatment devices. Although the thesis has potentially resulted in more questions than those answered, I was able to gain valuable experience with the MUSIC software which will be a highly useful skill for my future career.

**Liam Hedges**  
University of Wollongong

ACUR

Australasian Conference of Undergraduate Research

28 - 30 September 2022

<https://www.acur.org.au/2022-conference/>

# ACUR Conference turns 10!

## The 10th ACUR Conference is hosted by The University of Sydney on 28-30 September

**2022.** The anniversary marks a significant milestone in the development of undergraduate research in Australasia as the conference is growing stronger year on year. The ACUR conference turning 10 is a great achievement that we at ACUR are very proud of. After the conference traveled across the country stopping in Canberra, Adelaide, Melbourne, Perth, Rockhampton and Newcastle we are proud to bring it back to Sydney where ACUR was born. ACUR2022 will be another celebratory showcase of the quality and volume of undergraduate research occurring across Australasia.

The theme of this year's conference is 'Shaping the Conversation'. The University of Sydney organising committee chose the theme of 'conversation' to signal a welcoming, inclusive and collaborative platform where undergraduate researchers can participate, contribute and more importantly - shape the conversations that happen in the area of their research, be it politics, climate change, technological disruptions, gender equality, etc. In such conversations undergraduate researchers play a primary role in shaping this planet's future and their own.

Conversation essentially invites interaction. We want all conference participants to connect with peers at the conference and start long-lasting relationships. After these few challenging years where relationships and connections were put to the test, we want students to come together again and shape the conversations that will shape their futures. 'Conversation' will be a recurring theme all throughout the conference program. We hope that by using the word 'conversation' in the conference, we can encourage undergrads to ask hard questions, be curious, speak up and continue the dialogue long after ACUR2022.

Submissions will open on the 30th May and close on the 30th June. Details and updates will be posted on the ACUR website shortly:

<https://www.acur.org.au/2022-conference/>

As with previous ACUR conferences, ACUR2022@USYD will welcome submissions from undergraduate including Honours students at all stages and based on research students might have done either as part of their course or as part of an internship. As a multi-disciplinary conference, undergraduates have the opportunity to network with other undergraduate researchers from their own disciplines, and also to learn about how other disciplines approach research problems. Interested students need to submit an abstract and suggest with format they would like to

present in (a spoken presentation, a poster, or \*and NEW this year\* a performance). Participants will again have plenty of opportunities to attend numerous presentation sessions, workshops, and keynotes. A rich social program will ensure delegates walk away with new or renewed friendships and connections with like-minded peers.

This year DVC-Education at The University of Sydney have recruited the help of three PhD candidates at the University of Sydney to help organise a memorable event for undergraduate scholars across Australasia. Lilia asked each of them to share why they were keen to get involved and One Wish they had for the conference. Here is what they said:

## Olivia Urbaniak



"I am a third-year PhD student at the Sydney Conservatorium of Music. My PhD focuses on how to translate expert performers' strategies for performance preparation for early-career

performers. I joined ACUR because I believe it is essential to provide research students with the opportunity to share their research and learn from others. I also enjoy organising events and connecting with a wide variety of people. My one wish for the conference is to be a joyful and social event, where students can feel supported and encouraged to explore new ideas."

## Emma van der Schyff



"I am a PhD Candidate in the Faculty of Medicine and Health at the University of Sydney. I am fortunate to work within the Cyberpsychology Research Group to investigate the

impact of technology on behaviour. More specifically, my project focusses on the mental health help-seeking behaviour of videogame players, and how the community can better support this group to access professional mental health services. I am very excited to have a hand in organising ACUR2022. After a challenging two years I am looking forward to connecting with passionate researchers in-person again. I can't wait to meet with students from across disciplines to share in meaningful

conversations about their research. My hope is that the students take a lot away from the discussions and ideas at the conference, and feel inspired to keep asking questions and continue to shape the conversation about important issues globally."

## Nicky Gluch



"I am in my final year and doing a PhD at the Sydney Conservatorium of Music. A music advocate, more than a musician, in 2019 I published a book titled 'The Universal Language: about the

power of music to bridge difference'. With a Bachelor degree in Medical Science, I am excited about the interdisciplinary nature of ACUR conferences. It was for the opportunity to facilitate this meeting of minds that I applied to organise the conference, and I am looking forward to arranging workshops that do just that. Also, I was a radio presenter for 7 years with 2MBS Fine Music Sydney, and currently manage the klezmer-fusion band CHUTNEY."

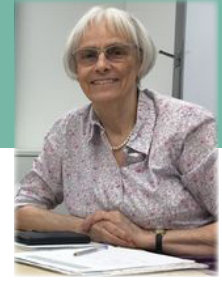
Emma, Nicky and Olivia are warmly welcomed to the ACUR community and will be supported by the ACUR Executive and Student Committees as well as The University of Sydney's representatives on the ACUR Steering Committee.

ACUR2022 conference organising committee

## Featured ACUR Resource Undergraduate Research Journals

*Did you know that ACUR lists a number of UG research journals that you might want to consider if a) you are a student looking to publish your research and experience the academic peer review, or b) if you are a supervisor wishing to provide your students with this experience and a platform to disseminate their research with a wider audience. Go to <https://www.acur.org.au/undergraduate-journals/> for a list of journals and let us know if you know of another journal we should know about, too.*

# Letter from the Chair



## **We are slowly coming back together following the pandemic.**

Zoom is all very well. It's great for getting business done. But there's nothing like a face-to-face meeting to really engage with people. There's nothing like the experience of a face-to-face conference for students to build networks, learn about research in different disciplines and have fun with other researchers. So I'm delighted that this year's ACUR conference is to be a face-to-face event at the University of Sydney on 28-30 September. Further details are included elsewhere in this issue. This will be a celebratory 10th anniversary event so please make sure you or your students are there. We are also going to bring institutional, individual and student members together in our 2nd ACUR Exchange Colloquium to be held in Sydney in early February next year. More details will be available very soon.

## **Researching undergraduate research**

In this issue, we see evidence of the ACUR Strategic Plan coming to fruition in reports of research carried out by the ACUR Executive including the Student Committee.

*Research at the undergrad level allowed me to work in a different dimension. That means exploring the field, addressing the research questions, and putting them in words. Although we do several similar tasks as assignments during our degree program, practically contributing to science and mankind is more motivational. Undergrad research ... taught me so*

*many things professionally which can't be learned via a simple assignment.*

(Anonymous quotation from survey of ACUR conference experiences).

A core ACUR value is the transformative power of research in all its forms as a vehicle for individual and collective learning. This research is demonstrating how this is practiced through the opportunities ACUR conferences provide.

Our research on how undergraduate research is being assessed has highlighted the creative work of academics as they find ways to assess multiple artifacts that develop students' critical skills and abilities throughout their research process. Many academics recognise that formal marks required by institutions don't match the transformative learning experience gained through engaging in research.

## **Where does ACUR belong in your university?**

There are clearly lots of benefits of being a member of ACUR. For example, it raises the profile of research provision and achievements; strengthens and publicly recognises efforts to engage students in research; facilitates access to the best international expertise on undergraduate research; ensures up to date knowledge of new developments worldwide; provides networking opportunities, events and numerous online resources; enables you to advertise undergraduate research opportunities; provides access to high quality future postgraduates; enables undergraduate students to present and profile their research;

encourages them to think about postgraduate study at an early stage;

provides opportunities for them to engage and build peer networks.

But recently I've been wondering where ACUR best fits within university structures. There are clearly many differences in institutional contexts but knowing where to put ACUR can be a stumbling block to future membership. Research and teaching occupy different and distinct areas of the university. Undergraduate research sits uneasily within the Research Office because it generally has little or no natural contact with undergraduates. On the other hand, for many academics the word "research" is not conceived to be about teaching. This can lead to dilemmas about who in the institution should be responsible for ACUR membership.

Undergraduate research provides important pathways to students' futures, so its links to the graduate school need to be strong. Where there are well-established undergraduate research internship or scholarship schemes, ACUR membership is a natural fit. But in some institutions, there seems to be a dilemma about whose responsibility it should be. If you would like to discuss the location of a future ACUR membership for your university or college, please contact me.

**Angela Brew**  
chair@acur.org.au

# ACUR Expands Connections

## **At ACUR we are keen to expand our national and international connections with other groups and organisations committed to promoting, celebrating and sharing undergraduate research.**

We are happy to promote events that other groups are running, and welcome stories from other groups to include in this biannual newsletter. We recently connected with the editorial team from the Undergraduate Research in Natural and Clinical Science and Teaching (URNCSST – pronounced "earnest") Journal, and think this journal may well be suitable for ACUR members to publish their undergraduate

research. The URNCST Journal is an independent research journal based in Toronto, Canada, that accepts research article submissions from undergraduate students all over the world. It was created to provide dedicated undergraduate researchers with a cost-effective and meaningful platform to showcase their research findings, and prides itself on eight defining characteristics: open access; peer-reviewed; rapid turnaround time; international; broad and multidisciplinary; indexed; innovative; and social media promoted. Moreover, URNCST involves postdocs and graduate students in mentoring undergraduates through the

publishing process. See more information at <https://www.urncst.com>.

Many of our readers will already be familiar with the Online Conference for Undergraduate Research in Australasia (OCURA), which was founded amidst COVID-19 in 2020. ACUR are happy to promote OCURA, where undergraduates and early HDRs can present their research, as well as gain experiences and insights that are rarely provided in the early stages of the research journey. Indeed, OCURA can be a great prelude to presenting in-person at ACUR. In 2022, OCURA also welcomes pre-confirmation PhD and Research Masters



students to present their proposal directions and gain peer-feedback on their ideas, before submitting for confirmation. OCURA2022 is currently accepting abstract submission and is set to run from August 31st to September

2nd. For details about abstract submission or volunteering to assist in the conference, click here or go to <https://tinyurl.com/yckttynm>. If you belong to an organisation that would like to connect with ACUR, please do not hesitate to

contact me [rachel.spronken-smith@otago.ac.nz](mailto:rachel.spronken-smith@otago.ac.nz).  
me [rachel.spronken-smith@otago.ac.nz](mailto:rachel.spronken-smith@otago.ac.nz).

**Prof Rachel Spronken-Smith**  
**University of Otago**

## Student Committee report



**The ACUR Student Committee has kicked off 2022 with a flurry of different tasks. This year the committee has been significantly streamlined and consists of 5 different undergraduate students from around Australia.**

**Head:** Max Kirkby, ANU

**Deputy Head:** Oliver Hervir, ANU

**Secretary and Conference Director:** Rachelle Tay, UNSW

**Careers Director:** Veronica Padilla, UNSW

**Publications Director:** Yastika Banerjee, UQ

The work and focus of the committee this year is centred on the theme of outreach. Based on our experiences in years gone past, the committee wishes to increase the profile of ACUR amongst the undergraduate student

population. To align with and hopefully meet this goal, some of the national projects that our team are currently working on include:

- Starting an 'ACUR Student Ambassador' program consisting of students from universities in each Australian state. We hope to use these ambassadors to broaden the reach of ACUR across all parts of the Australian tertiary sector and deliver more targeted events in 2023 and beyond.
- Developing 'introduction to research' presentation that can be delivered in seminar format at Australasian universities to 'open the eyes' of prospective students to the benefits of undergraduate research.
- Curating a list of research opportunities, scholarships and bursaries for undergraduate students in STEM, the

humanities and any field of study to access and benefit from.

We are also very excited to be working closely with students from the University of Sydney to help organise the 2022 ACUR Conference, to be held in September at the Camperdown campus.

I've been consistently impressed with the work of all our student members and am looking forward to the completion of these projects and the creation of a nation-wide ACUR network that can be leveraged in 2022 and beyond.

**Max Kirkby**  
**The Australian National University**

## “It’s everyone’s responsibility” - Changing behaviour of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women

*continued from page 1*

Indigenous individuals as objects of inquiry rather than being assigned the role of the researcher is why previous approaches have remained largely uninformed and ineffective for long-term change.

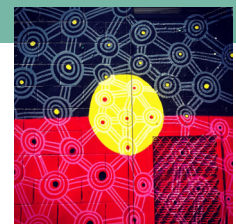
For Victoria's Indigenous people, as well as Indigenous people globally, there has been an ongoing push for the right to self-determination in decision-making that governs their lives and communities. Within this pursuit of

self-determination remains a demand for the Australian government to rectify its systematic and organisational approaches to more accurately represent the aspirations of Victorian Aboriginal communities and prioritise Indigenous-led ideas and decisions.

It will always be everyone's responsibility – Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians, corporate, community and government partners - to help keep Aboriginal and Torres Strait

Islander women safe from experiencing violence in their lives.”

**Isabelle Fischer**  
**Australian Catholic University**



## Future Events

[OCURA Online Conference For Undergraduate Research In Australasia](#)

31 August - 2 September 2022

[SORTEE Society for Open, Reliable, and Transparent Ecology and Evolutionary Biology](#)

Virtual conference 11-13 July 2022  
(UGR students welcome)

# Two New Books on Undergraduate Research published

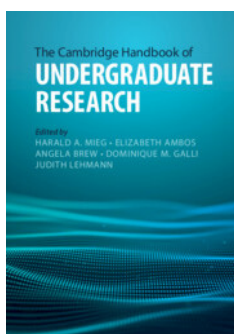
**International Perspectives on Undergraduate Research: Policy and Practice.** Edited by **Nancy H. Hensel and Patrick Blessinger** and published by **Palgrave Macmillan** in 2020.



“This edited volume explores how undergraduate research and research-based teaching is being implemented in countries around the world. Leading educators come together to discuss commonly accepted definitions of

undergraduate research, country-specific models and partnerships for student research, university policies and practices to support faculty and staff who engage students in research, and available assessment data that supports the effectiveness of undergraduate research as a means to increase student engagement and academic achievement. As undergraduate research has spread around the world, professors, administrators, and policymakers benefit by learning about other approaches and models of undergraduate research.” <https://link.springer.com/book/10.1007/978-3-030-53559-9>

**The Cambridge Handbook of Undergraduate Research.** Edited by **Harald A. Mieg, Elizabeth Ambos, Angela Brew, Judith Lehmann, Dominique Galli.** Published by **Cambridge University Press** in June 2022.



“Edited by an international team of world authorities in UR, this Handbook is the first truly comprehensive and systematic account of undergraduate research, which brings together different

international approaches, with attention to both theory and practice. It is split into sections covering different countries, disciplines, and methodologies. It also provides an overview of current research and theoretical perspectives on undergraduate research as well as future developmental prospects of UR. Written in an engaging style, yet wide-ranging in its scope, it is essential reading for anyone wishing to broaden their understanding of how undergraduate research is implemented worldwide.” <https://www.cambridge.edu.au/education/>

**Angela, Lilia and Rachel** have contributed chapters to these volumes. In Hensel & Blessinger, in a chapter entitled: “Turning a dream into reality: Building undergraduate research capacity across Australasia”. Angela and Lilia trace the development of undergraduate research within the framework of universities as inclusive scholarly knowledge-building societies.

Angela contributed to the theoretical underpinning of the Cambridge Handbook with chapters on A philosophy of undergraduate research, and (with the other editors) “Synopsis and Introduction: Toward a Democratization of Knowledge,” which is the introduction to the final part of the book. In “Undergraduate Research in Australia,” Lilia and Angela look at the development of the Australian political and social context of ACUR bringing the story up to date. Also in that volume, Rachel contributed (with Eric Pawson) a chapter on Undergraduate Research in New Zealand.

Consider requesting these books with your campus library and/or submit reviews to Amazon <https://tinyurl.com/2p9bw2tn> and [The Cambridge Handbook of Undergraduate Research](https://www.cambridge.edu.au/education/)

## Contact us

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