# Journal of the European Honors Council

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# Journal of the European Honors Council

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**Journal of the European Honors Council**
The aim of the Journal of the European Honors Council is to share research results, knowledge and good practices related to talent development and honors programs in higher education.

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During the publication process of this issue, Dr. Astrid Fritz resigned from the Editorial Board. We thank her for her contributions.
Copy editing for this issue was done by Saffyre Falkenberg at Texas Christian University (USA).

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# Journal of the European Honors Council, Volume 3, No. 2

## Contents

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1. **Introduction: Perspectives and insights on talent development and honors education**
   Maarten Hogenstijn. *Note*

2. **From 'green goals' to a broad understanding of sustainability: Honors students change the perspective of a university**
   Erik de Kruijff. *Note*

3. **The Role of Honors Teaching Assistants as Community Builders**
   Meghan Grassel, Hanna Holmquist, Rebecca Bott-Knutson. *Note*

4. **Design and Implementation of the Bachelor with Honors Program at TU Wien**
   Ulrich Schmid. *Note*

5. **Excellence in Arts Education: A Benchmark Research**
   Mariska Versantvoort. *Note*

6. **Education for the Gifted and Talented: Student teachers reflecting about autonomy, control, and pedagogical diagnostics in a self-designed workshop program for gifted schoolchildren**
   David Rott. *Paper*

7. **Lessons learned in setting up an open access journal: the case of JEHC**
   Maarten Hogenstijn, Marca V.C. Wolfensberger, Albert Pilot. *Paper*

# Instructions for authors

We invite you to submit research papers, as well as notes on good practices or preliminary research results to the Journal of the European Honors Council. Instructions on how to contribute can be found on the website www.jehc.eu.
There are two options for contributors: peer-reviewed papers or edited notes.

1. Peer-reviewed paper

This is a contribution of between 1,500 and 5,000 words (approximately). After receiving your paper, the editorial board will send it to two reviewers who remain anonymous to the authors. The reviewers can indicate if they accept the paper (with minor changes), ask you to submit a new version with major changes, or reject the paper. Major considerations are:

- The paper is written in English, in a clear and concise language that will help editors and reviewers concentrate on the scientific content of your paper.
- The paper is relevant in the context of the EHC goals (see below).

2. Edited note

This is a contribution of between 500 and 1,500 words (approximately), briefly summarizing (preliminary) findings or good practices. Notes are edited by the editorial board. They need to be written in English, in a clear and concise language that will help readers to concentrate on the content, which should be relevant in the context of the EHC goals (see below).

In all cases, authors should send in their manuscripts following the template which can be found through www.jehc.eu. Contributions are considered in the order they are received. Once accepted, we aim to publish as quickly as possible. Online publishing is in pdf-files.
In case of questions, the Editorial Board of the Journal of the European Honors Council can be contacted by e-mail: journal@honorscouncil.eu.

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The European Honors Council pursues the following goals:

1. Supporting and stimulating development of honors education and its structural embeddedness in the education system
2. Creating a common language
3. Supporting teacher professionalization (within honors)
4. Creation and exchange of knowledge about honors programs
5. Stimulating and facilitating research about honors
6. Enabling networking for people involved in honors
7. Stimulating spin-off of successful honors practices to regular education
8. Promoting an easier flow of talented students from secondary to higher education
9. Stimulating professional development of honors students and connection to working life / research career
10. Stimulating collaboration and inspiring student exchange at honors level

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*Note*

# Introduction: Perspectives and insights on talent development and honors education

Maarten Hogenstijn

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Published: 20 December 2019

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The Editorial Board is honored to present a new issue of the *Journal of the European Honors Council (JEHC*). *JEHC* aims to share knowledge and good practices regarding honors programs and talent development programs in higher education.

In this issue, we present a wide variety of perspectives. The contributors discuss practices in Austria, Germany, the Netherlands, and the United States, including the perspectives of students, teaching assistants, teacher education students, program coordinators, and researchers. A new honors program in Austria is introduced, and a benchmark contribution discusses honors programs in the arts. To top it off, we offer a paper which gives insight into the history of this journal, including a list of lessons learned in setting up the journal.

**1. Student perspectives**
The first two notes in this issue discuss the perspective of students.

In the note "From 'green goals' to a broad understanding of sustainability: Honors students change the perspective of a university," Erik de Kruijff explains how an interdisciplinary group of honors students made an impact on the sustainability policy of a university in the Netherlands. De Kruijff takes the reader along in the endeavors of the group, reflecting on process and progress in their honors program.

Honors students have a different role in the next note, "The role of honors teaching assistants as community builders." Meghan Grassel, Hanna Holmquist, and Rebecca C. Bott-Knutson from South Dakota State University (USA) assess the value of having undergraduate teaching assistants mentor small groups of students in first-year Honors Orientation classes.

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They conclude that teaching assistants have an important role in making connections between first-year students and the honors college.

In his paper "Education for the Gifted and Talented: Student teachers reflecting about autonomy, control, and pedagogical diagnostics in a self-designed workshop program for gifted schoolchildren," David Rott from the University of Muenster (Germany) combines perspectives of teachers and students. He discusses a program in which university students in teacher education design a program in which they act as teachers for gifted school children, which in turn serves as a kind of honors program for these teacher education students themselves. This is a potential win-win situation, and Rott analyses the results for the students, focusing on their experience of competence.

**2. Program perspectives**

Two more notes provide new insights on the level of honors programs.

First, Ulrich Schmid from TU Wien (Austria) explains the "Design and Implementation of the Bachelor with Honors Program at TU Wien." In a short period of time, Schmid and colleagues built a new Bachelor with Honors (BHons) program at the Faculty of Informatics at his university. The program is specifically oriented towards scientific research to motivate students to continue their education and complete a Ph.D.

In the note "Excellence in Arts Education: A Benchmark Research," Mariska Versantvoort, who was at Rotterdam University of Applied Sciences in the Netherlands at the time of doing the research, discusses honors program in relation to arts education. This is a topic of debate, as arts education specializes in talent development, and students are selected at the gate on their visual skills and creative capacity. What should honors education in the arts then look like? Versantvoort reports on a benchmark research in educational institutions in the Netherlands and the USA. Interestingly, she observes that the descriptors that art academies and institutes for performing arts use to promote their honours programs do not present anything out of line with the general theory on the subject.

**3. Creating this journal**

Finally, we present a paper on this journal itself: "Lessons learned in setting up an open access journal: the case of JEHC." The development of *JEHC* is described in four phases: lead-up to the first idea (2015-2016), from first idea to first issue (2016-2017), professionalization (2017-2018), and increasing impact (2018-). Ten lessons learnt are detailed, leading to a main piece of advice to others wishing to start an open access journal: inform yourself well before you start, but do not be afraid to learn along the way.

While this paper does not discuss research on honors education or talent development, we hope it provides valuable insights and perspectives on publication methods for our readers. An earlier version of this paper has been published in preprint through EdArxiv, and comments were taken into account when finalizing the paper.

**4. Final remarks**

In 2020, *JEHC* will continue to publish contributions on research into honors and talent development in higher education. The Editorial Board invites you to contribute to the next

issue(s) of the journal by sending in your papers and notes. All information on contributing can be found on the website www.jehc.eu.

**Acknowledgements**
The Editorial Board would like to thank Saffyre Falkenberg at Texas Christian University (USA) for copyediting and Hanze University of Applied Sciences Groningen (the Netherlands) for supporting the hosting of the Journal.

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# From 'green goals' to a broad understanding of sustainability: Honors students change the perspective of a university

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Keywords: honors students, sustainability, SDG

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**1. Sustainability journey towards the sustainable ambitions**

This note is about how a group of honors students changed the perspective of their university on the issue of sustainability. In the beginning of 2017, Hanze University of Applied Sciences (UAS) Groningen, the Netherlands, published their journey towards their sustainability ambitions.

Their aims were:
*0% waste by 2025*
*No more usage of natural gas in the buildings by 2025*
*Every student and every alumnus is a green ambassador by 2025*
*Their employees are sustainable role models for the world around them by 2025*

One of the most fundamental and visual steps the university took was in setting up the “Green Ambassador” program. Students and employees who are involved in sustainable projects are able to get a Green Ambassador certificate. The vision behind this certificate is to inspire students and employees to get involved in projects related to the theme of sustainability and to put an extra spotlight on these projects. The Green Ambassador program in itself did not reach the goals the university wanted, so the university decided to set up a ‘brain camp,” with the theme "Green Quest" which was organized by the Hanze Honors College.

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A brain camp is a project set in a relatively small time-frame (usually a few weeks), where the whole group works around a theme-based question. The question we, as honors students, had to work on in the brain camp was:

*"How do we get every student to be a sustainable ambassador and every employee to be a sustainable and healthy role model?"*

**2. An interdisciplinary group**
On the 23th of November, 2017, the Green Quest kicked off and the team was introduced. The team was made up of:

Annemiek van der Hoek – School of Arts
Olaf Booij – Psychology
Wietske Brouwer – Mechatronics
Steven Homsma – Industrial product design
Erik de Kruijff – Mechatronics

Within the introduction days, we were privileged to attend workshops, had small assignments, and visited a company that works in a new sustainable building. 'Design thinking' was one of the workshops where we learned more about how to create an idea and about reviewing the progress within the development process. The total introduction was only three days, just to give the tools and mind-set to work with a question and to get in touch with the theme of sustainability.

**3. Broadening sustainability**
During the kick-off days, we talked a about sustainability and the university's understanding of sustainability. We realized that they used terms like "Green Quest" and "Green Ambassadorship," and the goals where focused on the impact on nature and climate ('Green goals'). But, this is not the full definition of sustainability!

*Sustainability is the ability to be sustained, supported, upheld, or confirmed.*

Sustainability is not by definition intertwined with nature and/or climate. It is a term that can be used for so much more; for example, it can be used for economics, technology, and healthcare. Is this what our university wants to achieve, or do they only want to focus on climate-related goals? We had a talk with our coaches and the university, and we got the freedom to proceed with the definition of sustainability as we would see fit.

As a team, we started to brainstorm, research the different visions of sustainability, and discuss this topic. Is it enough to just focus on nature? Are there more issues in the world that need our attention?

At the end of December 2017, we concluded as a team that we would work with the vision of the United Nations (UN) of the definition of sustainability. They see sustainability in multiple segments of the world that all need focus. The UN writes about sustainability:

*"Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. It encompasses more than care for the environment. Development is sustainable if it also takes into account economic, human and social aspects: scarcity not only applies to natural resources; a highly educated and healthy population, well-functioning social networks, social trust, machines and infrastructure are also not in unlimited supply."* (CBS, 2019; based on Brundtland, Khalid, & Agnelli, 1987)

Source: https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/news/communications-material/

**4. Sustainable development goals**

The UN looks at the world as a globe that is continually under development and movement. New technology rises, dictators fall, and unstable countries are working to stabilize. Within this dynamic world, there needs to be room for movement. If not, no progress will be available. In the end, movement is life. The goals are there to guide the movement of the world so that the present needs are fulfilled but without compromising that of the future generations.

As an example, you want climate action due to decrease global warming, reduce plastics in the sea, and prevent extinction of multiple species. To do this, you need to make sure that people can earn their money in a good way. This includes making sure that ivory hunters can earn their money in a different way, and that third world countries get access to more advanced and clean technology so that pollution will reduce. To do this, you need high-quality education, so people can learn to work in the newly developed jobs and with the new technology. At this point, you are investing in economic growth, industrial innovation, and the minimization of poverty. There is not just one focus point if we want to create a world that we, as well as future generations, can all enjoy.

By using this vision of sustainability, we decided to rewrite the initial question and to refocus from green goals and climate to a wider focus on creating a better world in the different segments. Our new question became:

*"How do we stimulate all students and employees to think about and work with the 17 sustainability goals (UN) to improve the world for this and future generations?"*

**5. Meetings and presentations**

From this point, time went fast. As a team, we had the job to come up with ideas about how our university could implement these goals into their school program and make employees aware of and enthusiastic about working with them. There was absolutely no limitation on the creative freedom we had. Large papers filled with ideas started to fill up the room.

Halfway through January 2018, we were invited to do our first real presentation on the Sustainability Day of Hanze UAS. Teachers, employees, and even the director were attending our presentation, and we were able to get feedback. Critical questions from the audience were made, and we had a lot to discuss in our workgroup.

We decided to focus on the small practical steps our university could take and just create a global vision of all the amazing work they could do (like integrating the different sustainability goals into the different schools). One of the main points was to make clear why the university should broaden the vision of sustainability from a green aspect to the goals of the UN, how students would benefit, and what the university could gain from this shift as well.

**6. Convincing the director**

In March 2018, we had the chance to do our final presentation, and we decided to try to get the director of the school to attend as well. We got the opportunity to give our presentation at a meeting of the director and some employees, but we had to pitch what we wanted to talk about to the organizer of the meeting first. They were pretty direct; we should not expect more than five minutes during the meeting. Two of our teammates did the pitch, and the organizer was so enthusiastic that we got ten whole minutes to present our idea.

At that point, we did our presentation, and the response was really great. For us as students, the Green Quest was finished. We had to reflect on our progress, shake hands, and all go our separate ways again. On the 26th of June, 2018, we received an email from our Green Quest coach that the Hanze UAS, our university, accepted the sustainability goals of the UN and that our project had made an essential addition to this decision.

*Source: hanze.nl, 2018*

Working in an interdisciplinary team on a real-life project is an amazing experience. To be able to pitch the ideas to the stakeholders at the university was even better. But, in the end, there is no better feeling than knowing that our team created something useful.

**Acknowledgements**

*I would like to give special thanks to my fellow group mates: Olaf Booij, Steven Homsma, Annemiek van der Hoek, and Wietske Brouwer, who have worked so hard together with me on this subject. I am more than honored to be the one who writes this note!*

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# The role of honors teaching assistants as community builders

Meghan Grassel, Hanna Holmquist, and Rebecca C. Bott-Knutson*

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**Abstract:** Within the Van D. and Barbara B. Fishback Honors College at South Dakota State University (SDSU), undergraduate teaching assistants (TAs) mentor small groups of students in our first-year Honors Orientation classes. These near-peer guided small groups simulate the benefits of smaller classes within larger sections and promote relationship building within honors. To assess the value of having teaching assistants in these classes, we surveyed both the students enrolled in Honors Orientation as well as the undergraduate TAs. Students felt that relationships, academic support, and smaller group sizes were benefits of TAs in the classroom. The TAs believed the relationships they formed with other students were the primary benefit to their experiences, along with growth in teaching and mentoring skills. These results indicate our teaching assistants are important connections between first-year students and the Fishback Honors College.

Keywords: Honors education, community, teaching assistant, first-year experience

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## 1. Introduction

Small classes are known to increase involvement, academic performance, and satisfaction for students (Donahue, 2004). Additionally, connections to other students are important for student success within honors and the university as a whole (Donahue, 2004). The incorporation of undergraduate teaching assistants (TAs) into the honors classroom brings value for both the students enrolled in the course as well as the TAs. Smaller class sizes are undeniably better for student learning and experience (Beattie & Thiele, 2016). However, large class sizes are a necessity for many first-year courses given time and budget constraints. The integration of TAs mitigates some of the limitations of large class sections by mentoring students through the transition to college and facilitating community building in the course. Additionally, the TAs benefit from the experience through developing

mentoring and teaching skills. Overall, the utilization of TAs in large, introductory courses can greatly benefit students, TAs, and honors programs.

First-year students' ability to form connections is crucial for their retention to the university, as well as persistence within an honors college or program (Donahue, 2004). Thus, the importance of building community within first-year courses cannot be understated. Creating opportunities for students to make connections within their communities should be a priority for honors colleges (Johnson, 2009). In some college courses, TAs help build community among students by facilitating interactions among groups of peers, integrating academic support, and promoting opportunities for out-of-class engagement. Student learning and satisfaction greatly increase with the incorporation of a TA in the classroom, and this increased student interaction is also known to increase student learning (Johnson, 2009). So, TAs can help create classroom environments conducive to learning and community building. There are also benefits for students who serve as TAs. Peer teaching has psychological benefits, such as increased learning ability and a more positive connection to campus (Terrion, 2013). The learning process becomes bi-directional; when the TAs teach the material, it gives them a deeper understanding of the lessons. Additionally, Terrion (2013) stated that the TAs have increased networking opportunities, which can contribute to a positive experience at the university. Thus, it stands to reason that utilizing TAs in honors courses could lead to a more positive experience for TAs within the honors college through deeper relationships, learning, and leadership experiences.

## 2. Methods

The Honors Orientation course for first-year students at SDSU is designed as an introduction to the Fishback Honors College student experience. It is a one-credit, semester-long course built around themes of ethics, diversity, and empowerment and includes practical examination of integrating the honors experience within academic and co-curricular programs. Assignments cover requirements and tenants of the honors experience, such as coursework, service, and undergraduate research. Additionally, students are introduced to opportunities such as study abroad and campus involvement.

Each section of Honors Orientation has between 50 and 90 first-year students enrolled, and there were four sections of the class offered in the 2018 fall semester. Instructional methods include lectures, guest speakers, discussions, and group work. The honors dean and honors advisor co-teach all sections of the course along with the current honors students who serve as TAs. First-year students who enroll in the class are organized into small groups of about ten students led by one TA.

Twenty-nine students served as TAs during the semester of study. These TAs were sophomore, junior, and senior honors students from a variety of majors. TAs attended each meeting of the Honors Orientation class, where they led small group discussions and contributed to class presentations. The TAs also did some grading and attended out-of-class meetings and events. TAs participated in a half-day training before the start of the semester to prepare for their experience. The course instructors led this training and guided TAs through expectations and responsibilities for their role. It also introduced TAs to potential pitfalls, such as struggling students or grade disputes, tactics to overcome those challenges, and when to seek help from the instructors. TAs were further briefed on campus FERPA, Title

IX, and EO policies so that they would be familiar with protocols and how to maintain privacy and provide support in accordance with our institutional and federal requirements. TAs were also coached in creating goals for themselves and goals for their first-year students. At weekly meetings throughout the semester, TAs had opportunities to interact with the course instructors and fellow TAs to ask questions, share ideas, disclose progress on goals, and prepare for class presentations and discussions.

This study utilized both survey and interview techniques. An anonymous, online survey was developed and distributed via e-mail to all students enrolled in the Honors Orientation course at the conclusion of the fall 2018 semester. Students were asked to respond to the following questions, and responses were analyzed for similar themes by the researchers:

1. What were the most rewarding and/or beneficial things for you about having Teaching Assistants (TAs) in Honors Orientation?
2. In what ways could we develop the TA role to make the TAs an even more positive part of your Honors Orientation experience?

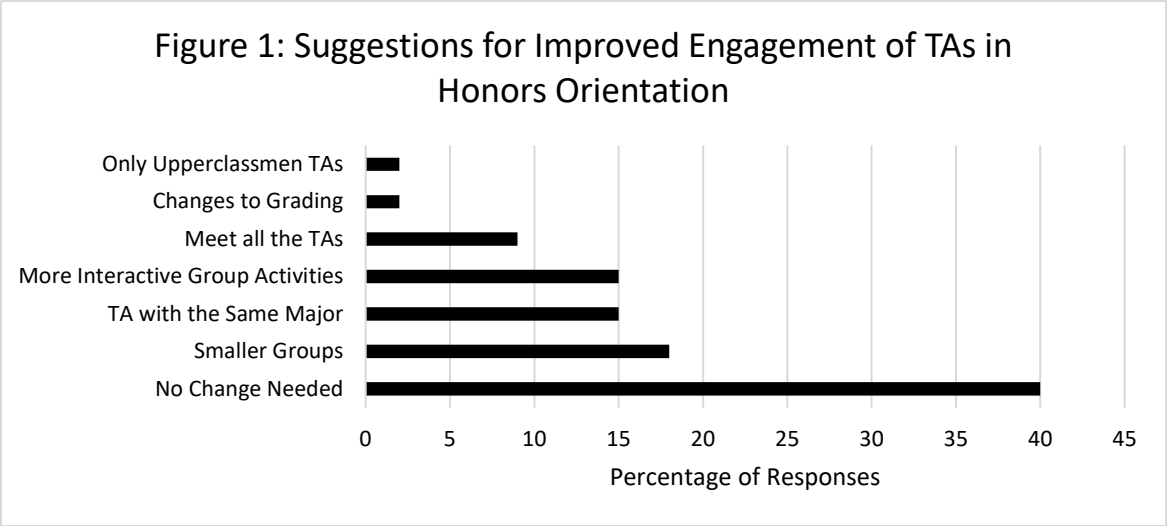
TAs who served in the Honors Orientation class during the previous semester were interviewed face-to-face by one of the researchers and asked about the most rewarding and challenging parts of their experience. TA responses were recorded during the interviews without identifying information. These responses were compiled and reviewed for common themes both among TAs and compared to the general themes of responses from our first-year students. Both elements of the study were approved by the Institutional Review Board.

## 3. Results

*First-year student responses*

The survey to first-year students yielded a 23% response rate with 55 out of 242 students completing the survey. The themes that emerged from the first-year students' responses about the benefits of working with TAs were mentorship support, smaller groups within the class, and academic support. The primary benefit reported by 71% of first-year students (n=39) was the mentorship they gained from the TAs. One student remarked, "It was really beneficial to have yet another friend/support here at SDSU as new members of the SDSU community." The second benefit reported by 29% of first-year students (n=16) was academic support. The first-year students felt their TAs helped them navigate the transition to college in their respective majors and within honors. Smaller group size within the class was also mentioned by 20% of the first-year students (n=11) as a benefit of having TAs in the course.

First-year students were also asked what could be improved about the ways TAs are utilized in the Honors Orientation course (Figure 1). Of the first-year students surveyed, 40% (n=22) provided no suggestions for improvement. 18% of students (n=10) felt that even smaller groups within the class would improve their experience. 15% of students (n=8) mentioned that having a TA who had the same major as them would have been an improvement, and the same number of students felt that more interactive activities within the TA groups would improve the experience. Having more opportunities to interact with all of the TAs and changes to grading processes were also mentioned as suggestions for improvement.




*Teaching assistant responses*

During interviews, TAs mentioned that they had future activities planned with students in their group. This indicates that TAs develop long-lasting relationships with their students, which helps keep students connected to the honors community beyond their first semester. TAs also said there was value in being placed in groups with students of a similar academic focus. TAs who were in groups where their students had the same major were able to share their academic experiences beyond honors and offer advice for rewarding academic experiences that were more relevant to their students. TAs remarked that the most rewarding part of the experience was seeing their students engage more broadly on campus. TAs were challenged in their experience as well. A reported challenge was having a student that was not actively engaging in class activities and discussions. TAs mentioned trying multiple tactics to overcome this challenge and feeling frustrated when the student still did not engage. Additionally, younger TAs found it difficult to give advice about some aspects of honors they had not yet experienced—such as undergraduate research.

While the first-year students expressed the value of TAs in terms of "mentorship" or "small groups," the TAs primarily focused on the value of forging long-lasting relationships. In a sense, both groups are ultimately addressing relationships and community. First-year students described the relationships at a micro-level, articulating specifics benefits of the relationships, whereas the TAs discussed relationships and the sharing of resources from a more global view.

## 4. Implications

TAs add value for first-year students through mentorship, academic support, and creating smaller groups within larger classes. The students who act as TAs also benefit from serving as mentors and developing connections with their students that extended beyond the classroom. For first-year students, building connections is integral to success at college and within honors (Donahue, 2004). TAs offer valuable academic support for first-year students, and they also serve as mentors and help students build connections within honors. Utilizing TAs in the Honors Orientation classes allows our honors community to flourish, and we believe this is a strategy that can be implemented with similar success in other honors colleges and programs.

**Acknowledgments**: We appreciate the tremendous talent and community building efforts of our honors teaching assistants.

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# Design and Implementation of the Bachelor with Honors Program at TU Wien

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**Abstract:**
This note outlines the Bachelor with Honors (BHons) program of the Faculty of Informatics at TU Wien, the very first honors program shaped according to American standards at an Austrian university. Besides the usual excellence goals of such programs, a main driver for its creation was exposing gifted students to scientific research very early in their academic careers to hopefully prevent them from accepting industry jobs before doing a Ph.D. Main design challenges were broad accessibility for all top students, demanding and fully transparent admission and completion rules, and dealing with severe resource constraints for running the program. Main implementation challenges were the need to convince other Faculties at TU Wien that the BHons would not jeopardize the existing Bologna-type study programs and to overcome certain reservations against such "elite programs" in general. Substantial efforts eventually convinced the senate of TU Wien to approve the program, which was started in January 2018. Albeit still in the bootstrapping phase, we are happy to say that the program has developed very well so far.

Keywords: Bachelor with Honors programs, Bologna system, design challenges, implementation challenges

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## 1. Introduction and Overview

Driven by the need to adequately support and challenge excellent students within the tight constraints of a "mass university" like TU Wien, where more than 600 freshmen enroll to one of the Bachelor programs of the Faculty of Informatics every year, we started to consider ways of accomplishing this in 2016. Besides supporting excellence, a main goal was also to possibly counterbalance the increasing trend among our top Master graduates to accept industry jobs before doing a Ph.D.

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Our considerations quickly converged towards creating a Bachelor with Honors (BHons) program in the American style. Main design challenges for establishing such a program in our Faculty were broad accessibility for all our top students, irrespective of the particular Bachelor program they are enrolled in, defining demanding and fully transparent admission and completion rules that make passing the program a real accomplishment, and, last but not least, implementing it without allocating a substantial amount of dedicated resources. Whereas meeting all our design challenges finally turned out to be surprisingly easy, we faced unforeseen problems to actually implement the BHons officially at TU Wien. Main obstacles were the need to convince other Faculties within TU Wien that the BHons would not jeopardize the existing Bologna-type study programs, to maintain compatibility with the law, and to overcome certain deeply-rooted reservations against such "elite programs" in general. Nevertheless, substantial promotion efforts and discussions eventually convinced our senate to approve the program, which could hence be launched in January 2018. Albeit still in the bootstrapping phase, we are happy to say that the program has developed very well so far.

**Note outline:** In Section 2, we provide a glimpse of the context and the particular goals of our BHons program. Section 3 briefly describes the design challenges that shaped its development, and Section 4 summarizes its mission, cornerstones, and structure. Section 5 sketches some of the problems we faced during its implementation, and Section 6 provides a short summary of its current status and our future plans. The paper is rounded off by some conclusions and lessons learned in Section 7.

## 2. Motivation and Goals

Unlike in the American academic system, where the importance of honors programs is out of question (Willingham, 2018), to the extreme that Ivy League places like MIT rightfully consider their whole study programs as such, and that "BSc (Hons)" graduates of other universities have a clear competitive advantage over regular ones, the situation is quite different in Europe. Whereas there is a remarkably wide range of excellence programs available, at various levels, in essentially every European country (Wolfensberger, 2015), dedicated Bachelor with Honors programs according to American standards are not generally perceived as a "must have" and are hence quite rare – with the Netherlands forming a remarkable exception, however.

One of the reasons, besides wide-spread reservations against "elite programs" in general, can arguably be traced back to the Bologna system (European Ministers of Education, 1999) with its 3 year Bachelor + 2 year Master + Ph.D., which somewhat disfavors Bachelor-level honors initiatives. Unlike the US system, which allows graduates of 4 years Bachelor programs to immediately enter a Ph.D. school, a European 3 years Bachelor graduate cannot do much besides enrolling in a Master program. As only the latter is usually considered a "real" graduation of a study program, hence a prerequisite for entering a Ph.D. program, for example, there is not much incentive to excel at the Bachelor level.

Nevertheless, we do have excellent students also at TU Wien that deserve to be taken care of adequately from the very beginning, and we do have the responsibility to provide industry and academia not just with a large number of good graduates but also with top ones – the

"classic" duty of honors programs in general. Supporting true excellence was hence the obvious first goal for the design of our envisioned BHons program.

In addition, for quite some time already, several areas in computer science face the problem that the excessive demand of industry for graduates starts to drain scientific research. Given the salaries offered by industry for top Master students nowadays, it is increasingly difficult to "seduce" them to do a Ph.D., even if full funding is available. Apart from the immediate negative consequences for the academic research community, this is also a dangerous development for industry in the longer term; declining scientific research will eventually also slow down their future development.

The second main driver for developing our BHons program was hence the vision that it could provide a handle to also approach this problem, as it provides the opportunity to expose talented students to scientific research early on. In our regular study programs, this happens, at best, late at the Master level. As a consequence, the typical exposure time to scientific research is not long enough to "infect" students with the "research virus," i.e., the fascination with and the satisfaction originating in successful scientific research, something that is very different from what they know from regular courses. If this happened already at the Bachelor level, according to our idea, this might prevent some students from leaving academia without a Ph.D.

Driven and coordinated by the author of this paper (but see the long list of contributors given in the acknowledgments at the end), we started to approach the above mentioned problems by designing a suitable Bachelor with Honors program at the Faculty of Informatics at TU Wien in 2016. The particular goals of the BHons, in line with TU Wien's general goal of supporting excellence, were to:

(i) effectively and early challenge and support outstanding students,
(ii) early develop research interests,
(iii) adequately educate our top students within a "mass university",
(iv) provide better career perspectives for them, and
(v) attract excellent students to computer science.

## 3. Design Challenges

The special situation in our Faculty of Informatics, which runs 5 different Bachelor programs with overall more than 600 freshmen every year, posed several challenges that could not be addressed by the typical setup of honors programs like the one of the University of Oslo (Myklebust, 2019), for example.

Indeed, we were faced with the question of how to set up a Bachelor with Honors program that:

- is accessible for all talented Bachelor students in our Faculty, irrespective of their particular study program,
- allows admission based on the actual performance of the applicants in their regular Bachelor program at TU Wien, i.e., is not based on accomplishments obtained outside our sphere of control,

- has completion criteria that provably select for the < top-5% of our students, in a way that is strictly performance-based, transparent, easy to monitor internally, and easily verifiable from the outside,
- is attractive enough for gifted students to take both the additional effort and the risk of failing the program,
- provides tangible benefits for students who successfully complete the program,
- is easy to implement and does not consume significant resources for running the program,
- is compatible with the Austrian law, and hence with the Bologna system, and
- can be "exported" to other Faculties at TU Wien with minor effort and adaptions.

Whereas it was not at all clear at the beginning whether we would be able to meet all these challenges, it was finally surprisingly easy to do so. The process of developing our BHons program was essentially based on assembling a draft program, which was successively refined by collecting, integrating, and refining suggestions for improvement issued by an expert group. In the following section, we describe the final result of this process, which indeed meets all the challenges above.

**4. Cornerstones of our BHons Program**

***Mission statement**:*
"*The Bachelor with Honors Program of the Faculty of Informatics at TU Wien targets excellent students from all Bachelor Programs in Informatics and Business Informatics, who are seeking individual challenges in addition to their regular studies. It aims to nurture outstanding students in line with their talents, and to engage them in scientific research at an early point in their studies."*

***Key features:***

- Bachelor with Honors program (45-60 ECTS), individually composed by the student, consisting of:
    - Bachelor and Master courses of any reasonable study program, at any good university. Note that Master courses may be shared with a concurrent regular Master program!
    - Few BHons-specific courses (orientation, internship project, summer school).
    - Some restrictions for the 45 ECTS standard program (like not too many projects, to prohibit supervisors from abusing BHons students as workhorses); no restrictions (but the need for a convincing justification) for the extended 60 ECTS program. Note that the latter takes a full year, for compatibility with international 4 years Bachelor programs.

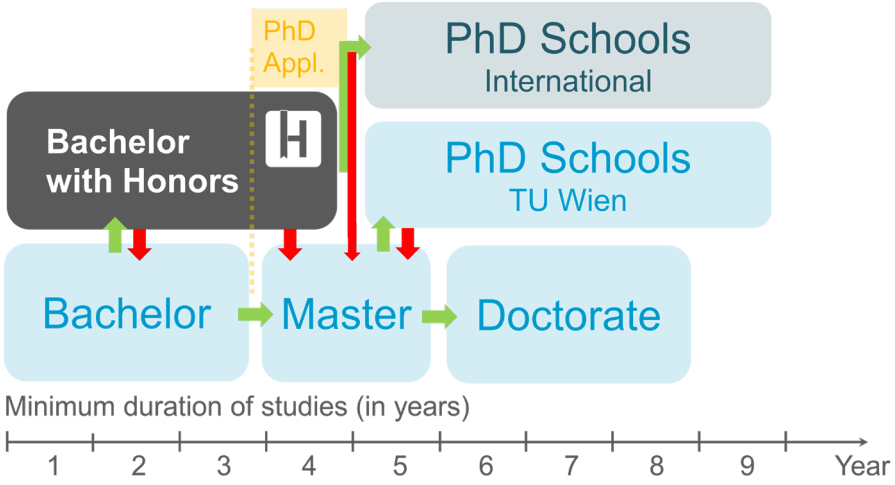
  The individual BHons program must make sense topic-wise, and must respect all dependencies of the selected courses. It needs to be justified upon application.
- Individual mentoring by a full or associate professor of the Faculty, who can be chosen by the student.
- Admission twice a year, subject to performance-based criteria:
    - Passing of at least 72 ECTS of mandatory courses in the regular Bachelor program, with weighted grade point average ≤ 2.0 (the Austrian grades range is 1 – 5, with 1 being the best grade),

  - a realistic chance to meet the completion criteria (which are considerably harder, see below),
  - a suitable and convincing BHons program,
  - a suitable mentor.
- Solely performance-based completion criteria, which provably select for the < top-5% of our students:
  - Completion of regular Bachelor program with distinction,
  - overall weighted grade point average of both regular Bachelor program and BHons program ≤ 1.5,
  - overall duration of regular Bachelor + BHons program ≤ 9 semesters overall.

  Note carefully that the fulfillment of these requirements can be validated externally, by means of the certificates for the regular Bachelor program and the BHons. Fulfilling these criteria is hence a real accomplishment.
- No monitoring of the students while in the BHons program: students failing the completion criteria won't get a certificate and drop out automatically after 9 semesters.
- Successful completion earns:
  - Representative Bachelor with Honors certificate, signed by the TU Rector, the TU Vice-Rector for Academic Affairs, the Dean and the Dean of Academic Affairs of the Faculty of Informatics. The certificate also lists the complete BHons program and the obtained grades.
  - A personal letter of recommendation from the TU Rector, certifying being among the < top-5% of our students.

***Embedding in our study programs:***
Designed as a 1-year extension of their regular Bachelor's degree, students with outstanding academic achievements can acquire a 4-years Bachelor's degree with Honors comparable to the American model (Figure 1):

*Figure 1. Positioning of Bachelor with Honors program*




Students can enter the BHons program at any time during and even after their regular Bachelor program, subject to the above performance and time constraints. The additional 45-60 ECTS BHons program can overlap with a simultaneously enrolled Master program,

which allows BHons students who fail the BHons completion criteria not to lose the credits already obtained. Note that BHons students can apply for external Ph.D. schools already after having obtained their regular Bachelor degree (i.e., after 3 years), and can use the waiting period until decision for completing the BHons program.

**5. Implementation Challenges**

The process of designing the BHons program proceeded reasonably smoothly and converged quickly, despite the fact that people (professors, students) with very different perspective were involved. What we did not at all foresee initially, however, were massive objections against the BHons in other Faculties at TU Wien and in the senate that popped up only when we tried to officially implement it:

- The philosophy of other Faculties at TU Wien rests firmly on their Master programs, in the sense that the main academic education happens there. Since our BHons essentially allows students to simulate a 4 years Bachelor, which allows admission to international Ph.D. programs, it is considered a threat to their Master programs. Consequently, as of now, BHons graduates are not allowed to immediately enter a Ph.D. program at TU Wien.
- A substantial fraction of faculty members openly displayed their reservations against a honors program in general, culminating in statements like “favoring good students is a discrimination of bad ones” (made by a full professor!), for example. This is in line with Wolfensberger (2015), who observed that it is the case (albeit rarely admitted) that many people resent “elite programs” and competitiveness in Austria, like in many other European countries.
- Some members of the senate were concerned about potential incompatibilities with the law, in particular, the Bologna rules.
- Some members of the senate, in particular, the student representatives, were concerned about the danger of creating a “2 class society” among our students.

Overcoming those objections proved to be a challenge and ate up more than half a year of promoting the BHons and discussion with many members of the seven other Faculties and, last but not least, of the senate of TU Wien, who is responsible for approving all study programs.

Fortunately, the final vote in the senate was in favor of implementing our BHons program, which is hence part of the official curricula of all Bachelor programs of the Faculty of Informatics since October 2017, see e.g. (Faculty of Informatics TU Wien, 2019).

**6. Current Status**

The BHons program started in January 2018. As of October 2019, 24 students have been admitted to the program overall, 4 successfully graduated, and 1 failed the completion criteria.

Given the very high teaching load of the members of our faculty, it is impossible to invest substantial resources into dedicated BHons courses in the foreseeable future. Consequently, the number of BHons-specific courses is currently very low:

- There is a mandatory 1 ECTS BHons Orientation course, which is primarily used for internal community building.
- Standard courses based on individual supervision, like scientific and engineering projects and Bachelor thesis, are tailored to the needs of BHons students: Typically, they include the involvement into some funded research projects. Actually, since 2018, the two major research funding agencies in Austria, the Austrian Science Fund (FWF) and the Vienna Science and Technology Fund (WWTF) allow their project leaders to also fund BHons students from their projects.
- There are dedicated BHons courses for short-term internship projects (long-term projects are incompatible with the demanding BHons requirements and hence discouraged) and summer/winter schools, which broaden the horizon and are hence very attractive for our BHons students. They usually require scholarships, however.

Resources permitting, our plan is of course to increase the number of specific BHons courses in the future, e.g., by means of dedicated seminars.

***BHons internship program*:** 5-week internship projects (6 ECTS) at academia (better ranked than TU Wien) or industry (well-known and also research-oriented). Currently, our network consists of the following host institutions:

- *Academia*: Purdue University, ENS Cachan, MPI Saarbrücken, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, IST Austria.
- *Industry*: Infineon, Intel, Robert Bosch AG.

Negotiations with other potential host institutions are on-going; individually arranged internship projects are also quite common.

***BHons scholarship program:*** Application-based scholarships (typically € 3,000), given by our Faculty and also sponsors (research funding, academia, industry). Current sponsors, besides our own Faculty, are:

- *Austrian funding agencies*: WWTF, FWF.
- *Industry*: Infineon, Intel.

Negotiations with other potential sponsors are on-going (but tough).

Last but not least, we also took measures to better integrate BHons students into our Faculty: For example,

- all social events of our various Ph.D. Schools (like LogiCS and RES) are also open for BHons students,
- BHons graduations take place at the EPILOG of our Faculty of Informatics, where all Master theses of the last semester are on display and the "Distinguished Young Alumnus" is elected among those.

***Success stories:*** Some of our BHons students did extremely well in international competitions, which shows that the program already comes up to our expectations. A few examples:

- Two of our BHons students applied successfully to the extremely competitive 2019 Research Fellowship Program at ETZ Zurich.
- One of our BHons students successfully published his first research paper at a conference, which also won an invitation to a journal special issue for the best papers.

- From the 2018 report of the International Advisory Boards (IAB) of the Faculty of Informatics at TU Wien [Hans Akkermans (Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam), Carlo Ghezzi (Politecnico di Milano), Edward A. Lee (UC Berkeley), Nadia Magnenat-Thalmann (University of Geneva / Nanyang Technological University), Moshe Vardi (Rice University): 'The Bachelor with Honors program is a great initiative.'

***Future Plans:*** Despite the very positive signs listed above, our BHons program is still in a bootstrapping phase. We currently do not get even half of the students who are in the < top-5% range to apply for the BHons program, which reveals considerable room for improving the attractiveness and the awareness of our prospective students. We are also continuously working on possibly expanding our still very small network of internship host institutions and, in particular, on attracting a larger number of prestigious sponsors for BHons scholarships.

Ultimately, a convincing sign of having eventually succeeded with our program would be the adoption of our BHons program by some other faculty at TU Wien or elsewhere.

**7. Conclusions: Lessons learned**

In this note, we provided an overview of the goals, design challenges and implementation of the Bachelor with Honors program of the Faculty of Informatics at TU Wien. The most important lessons learned in the course of setting up and running our BHons program were the confirmation of the importance of:

(i) having a clear vision of the goals of the program,
(ii) our strong commitment to demanding, solely performance-based and fully transparent admission and completion criteria,
(iii) our strive for creating a true win-win situation for students and faculty, including the implementation of an escape path in case of failures, and
(iv) our decision to primarily offer opportunities to the students but giving them as much freedom as possible.

Our experience with designing and setting up the BHons during the last 3 years allow us to conjecture that succeeding with such an effort requires primarily (i) an experienced and well-connected person who is really devoted to this task and is willing to invest quite some time and effort to drive and coordinate the various activities that are needed for its design and implementation, and (ii) representatives at all levels, from the faculty to the senate to the rectorate, who wholeheartedly support the undertaking. Our BHons proves that it is doable if these prerequisites are met.

**Acknowledgments**

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of the senate of TU Wien, for his vital efforts to make the BHons compatible with the law and to convince the senate, all members of our senate, like Simone Knaus, who were in favor of our BHons, and last but not least our Rektorin Sabine Seidler and Vizerektor Kurt Matyas for their understanding and support. Establishing and running the program would have been impossible without the active support by the Communications Center of the Faculty of Informatics, namely, by Eva Straka, Martin Wagner, Stefanie Madsen and Peter Pahs, and by Ricarda Aminger from the Dean's office.

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### Link

Details about the program can be found at http://informatics.tuwien.ac.at/bachelor-with-honors

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*Note*

# Excellence in Arts Education: A Benchmark Research

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## 1. Introduction: A Paradox

At the Willem de Kooning Academy in Rotterdam (the Netherlands), we have been struggling for some time now with the questions: How does the honours programme[2] distinguish itself from the regular curriculum? Art education specialises in talent development, unlike the majority of higher education programmes. Students are selected at the gate on their visual skills and creative capacity. Likely as a result of this unique position, my colleagues and I experience that our students have an above average level of intrinsic motivation and task dedication – two defining characteristics of excellent students – when compared with their peers at other institutes. Though this seems to suggest that all our students are potential honours students, in practice we do observe the need for greater differentiation. Here we arrived at a paradoxical question: How is it possible to design honours education for specifically-talented students? Notably, no literature could be found on this subject.

The research therefore had a threefold aim: 1) to create a frame of reference for honours and/or excellence in arts education; 2) to visualise the position of the honours programme at the Willem de Kooning Academy vis-à-vis its discipline-specific partners in the Netherlands as well as abroad; and 3) to create a tentative understanding of the authenticity of honours education in the arts.

## 2. Methodology and Limitations

In order to gain insight into the field of honours education at universities for the arts, a benchmark research study was carried out. In this research, the websites of Dutch universities for the arts were compared with those from art academies, conservatories, and institutes for performing arts in the United States. The choice for conducting a comparative

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analysis between the Netherlands and the US was based on a limitation found with regard to the initial research premise, which is explained in the next paragraph. With regard to the latter a selection was made to create a sample size numerically similar to the Netherlands. Institutes were compared and contrasted based on key words in their texts as well as on their statements regarding the characteristics of the honours student and the didactics of the programme (see: Wolfensberger, 2012, p. 23-46; Kazemier et al., 2014; and, Tiesinga & Wolfensberger, 2014, p. 14). The result is an inventory on the current state of honours programmes in arts education.

There are three notable limitations to the scope of this research. First of all, the study did not engage with any explanatory literature in order to interpret its results. Secondly, it was initially designed to include European as well as non-Western universities for the arts. Within the partner network of the Willem de Kooning Academy, however, no such institutes were found to have honours programmes, or their websites were inaccessible as a result of language barriers. Universities in the United Kingdom were excluded from the survey. In the UK, honours degrees are primarily awarded on the basis of a student's grade average. The recent concerns raised by the UK Secretary of Education Damian Hinds regarding the inflation of these grades arguably call into question the standing of UK honours trajectories (Department of Education, 2019). They have therefore not been taken into consideration. Lastly, in order to create the sample of American universities, data were used from the QS World University Ranking, as well as niche.com (Colliers, 2019) and onestageblog.com (Peterson, 2018). Multiple sources were consulted because there seems to be no single authoritative ánd representative list available on all these disciplines.

**3. Findings**

To start with numbers: In the Netherlands, 4 out of 10 public art academies facilitate an honours programme, compared to only one conservatory, and none of the departments for dance or theatre. In the United States, 6 of the 16 researched art academies provide an honors program, with 2 academies more offering a course closely related to honours education. In addition, 4 of the 10 researched American conservatories and theatre schools have an honors trajectory. And, lastly, 3 out of 10 dance academies state an honors program on their website (see table 1). With regard to the latter two, however, all except one university refer to a university-broad programme that is neither further elaborated upon nor in any way specific to theatre or dance education. These have therefore not been taken into account for the analysis.

Within music education, "honours" or "excellence" seems to be exclusively reserved for student musicians who excel in their discipline. It is used to qualify results rather than to analyse and act upon successful study behaviour. Students who show to be exceptionally gifted receive additional coaching, are given opportunities to perform in public, or can continue their studies in a master programme. Descriptions on the websites are brief and mainly list criteria students must meet in order to be selected. Though the texts suggest that successful competitors for the two honours ensembles must also have good collaborative skills and an entrepreneurial attitude, no specific characteristics of either the student or the programme didactics are mentioned explicitly on any of the websites. An exception to this rule is the Prince Claus Conservatory in the Netherlands – see table 2. This institute provides

motivated students with an interdisciplinary trajectory that challenges the young musicians to situate their practice with a broader societal context.

With regard to art and design education, universities in the Netherlands emphasize a student's motivation over grade point averages or other formal requirements. The didactics of the programmes focuses, by extent, on building a community of students with similar levels of intrinsic motivation and task dedication as well as deepening academic competence – see table 4. American universities, on the other hand, say little to nothing about the characteristics of the students they seek to educate. Instead the content of their curriculum is placed in the limelight. The orientation of these academic programmes is split between universities that offer their students an accelerated or advanced theory course versus those who provide unique opportunities for further professional training, such as field trips or a residency programme – see table 3. Another key difference is the fact that in the United States honors programs are fully embedded within the regular curriculum, whereas most Dutch students still partake in it as an extra-curricular activity. What the descriptions of honours programmes in both countries have in common, though, is that these texts neither elaborate on the institute's core values and objectives – as is common for university colleges, the archetypical honours programmes – nor expand upon the impact of the programme on the careers of graduates. To note, 3 out of 5 Dutch academies mention, in a few words, that honours students can continue their studies at master level, versus 2 out of 8 American institutes. However, no proof of effect is provided.

Notably, only few universities give a definition of cleverness – the integration of analytical ability, creativity, and practical intelligence (Wolfensberger, 2012, p. 48), a student's need for self-management, and what Wolfensberger coined the didactics of "bounded freedom" (ibid, p. 117-118). OTIS College of Art and Design explicitly addresses "cleverness" in their academic core, which exists of a studio 'foundation', a 'liberal arts and sciences' theory programme, and 'creative action'. All aspects are mirrored and enhanced in the objectives of their honors program. The so-called Practices at the Willem de Kooning Academy have a similar potential, which is not yet utilised in their honours programme. Bounded freedom, in turn, is most recognisably provided through having students write their own learning plan. It is however not possible to assess the full extent of this characteristic as none of the universities' descriptions elaborate in detail on their didactics.

Zooming in on the Netherlands, all academies state that their honours course is interdisciplinary. The scope thereof notably differs from offering an interdepartmental programme to collaborating with students from disciplines outside the humanities. Here too the academic content of the programme seems to be split, in this case, between providing an advanced theory course and working on so-called wicked problems in a societal context. Though honours programmes in The Netherlands are often seen as laboratories for educational innovation (Weerheijm, Veenstra & Ter Woord, 2015, p. 2), only Gerrit Rietveld Academy names it as one of the defining characteristics albeit in relation to their content rather than didactics. All programmes are a collaborative endeavour with a so-called centre of expertise, which are research groups at Dutch universities of applied sciences.

## 4. Preliminary Observations

As stated above, this research had the aim to create a first inventory of honours programmes at universities for the arts, rather than to elaborate upon, scrutinize, or explain its findings. There is nevertheless a preliminary observation that can be made from the data gathered. Although the initial premise of this study suggested that there would be an intrinsic difference between honours education at universities for the arts and institutes that do not preselect their students on the basis of a specific talent, there is no information found that would support such a presupposition. The descriptors that art academies and institutes for performing arts use to promote their honours programmes do not present anything that is out of the ordinary with the general theory on the subject – regardless of reservations on the level of implementation of various elements. There is a notable distinction between institutes that interpret excellence as successful study behaviour and those that see excellence as something that can be measured through grades and discipline-specific achievements. Hence, insofar as "excellence" and "talent development" are an on-going conversation within educational practice that is focused on a student's behaviour, universities for the arts seem to abide by the same paradigm as other educational institutes.

## 5. Concluding Remarks for Further Research

The initial research question driving this study still stands: How is it possible to design honours education for specifically-talented students? This benchmark has been a first attempt to fill what seems to be a void in the existing literature on excellence. This note is therefore an invitation to others to share their knowledge on honours education in the context of art, design, music, dance, and theatre. One way forward is to look into the successes of our honours programmes; what are the effects of honours education on our students' learning outcomes and their professional careers? In other words, to what extent is "excellence" in arts education making a difference?

## Acknowledgments

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*Table 1: List of Universities*

| Colour Coding Explained | |
|---|---|
| | The university states an honours programme on their website. |
| | The university does not state an honours programme on their website, but does provide a trajectory similar or partial to such a programme. |
| | The university facilitates students from non-art disciplines to enrich their studying by partaking in art classes. |

| UNIVERSITIES OF THE ARTS, The Netherlands | |
|---|---|
| AKV St. Joost, Breda and Den Bosch<br>_Fine Art, and Design | |
| Amsterdam University of the Arts, Amsterdam<br>_Music, Dance, and Theatre | |
| ArtEZ University of the Arts, Arnhem, Enschede, and Zwolle<br>_Fine Art, Design, Music, Dance, and Theatre | |
| Codarts, Rotterdam<br>_Music, Dance, and Theatre | |
| Conservatorium Haarlem, Inholland University of Applied Sciences, Haarlem<br>_Music | |
| Design Academy, Eindhoven<br>_Design | |
| Fontys Academy for Art, Tilburg<br>_Fine Art, Design, Music, Dance, and Theatre | |
| Gerrit Rietveld Academy, Amsterdam<br>_Fine Art, and Design | |
| Academy Minerva and Prins Claus Conservatory, Hanze University, Groningen<br>_Fine Art, Design, Music, and Dance | |
| HKU University of the Arts, Utrecht<br>_Fine Art, Design, Music, and Theatre | |
| Royal Academy of Art, The Hague<br>_Fine Art, and Design | |
| Royal Conservatoire, The Hague<br>_Music, and Dance | |
| Willem de Kooning Academy, University of Applied Sciences, Rotterdam<br>_Fine Art, and Design | |
| Zuyd University of Applied Sciences, Maastricht<br>_Fine Art, Design, Music, Dance, and Theatre | |

| ART UNIVERSITIES, United States of America (partner institutes of the WdKA) | |
|---|---|
| Maryland Institute College of Art, Baltimore<br>_Fine Art and Design | |
| Massachusetts College of Art and Design, Boston<br>_Design, incl. Liberal Arts | |

| | |
|---|---|
| OTIS College of Art and Design, Los Angeles<br>_Fine Art, and Design, incl. Liberal Arts and Sciences | |
| Ringling College of Art and Design, Sarasota<br>_Fine Art, and Design, incl. Liberal Arts | |
| 24. School of Visual Arts, New York<br>_Fine Art, and Design | |
| The Art Institute of Boston, Lesley University, Boston<br>_Fine Art, Design, and Liberal Arts and Sciences | |

| ART UNIVERSITIES, United States of America (QS World University Ranking 2019) | |
|---|---|
| 03. Parsons School of Design at The New School, New York City<br>_Fine Art, and Design, incl. Liberal Arts | |
| 04. RISD Rhode Island School of Design, Providence<br>_Fine Art, and Design, incl. Liberal Arts | |
| 05. MIT Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Cambridge<br>_Music, and Theatre | |
| 09. SAIC School of the Art Institute of Chicago<br>_Fine Art, Design, and Liberal Arts | |
| 10. Pratt Institute, New York City<br>_Fine Art, Design, and Liberal Arts and Sciences | |
| 13. Art Center College of Design, Pasadena<br>_Fine Art, and Design | |
| 14. Stanford University<br>_Fine Art, Music, Dance, and Theatre | |
| 17. Carnegie Mellon University, Pittsburgh<br>_Fine Art, Design, Music, and Theatre | |
| 21. California Institute of the Arts, Santa Clarita<br>_Fine Art, Design, Music, Dance, and Theatre | |
| 22. California College of the Arts, San Francisco and Oakland<br>_Fine Art, and Design | |

| CONSERVATORIES, United State of America (niche.com) | |
|---|---|
| 01. The Curtis Institute of Music, Philadelphia | |
| 02. Berklee College of Music, Boston | |
| 03. The Juilliard School, New York | |
| 04. The New England Conservatory of Music<br>_Honors Ensemble | |
| 05. University of Southern California, Los Angeles | |
| 06. Blair School of Music, Vanderbilt University, Nashville | |
| 07. San Francisco Conservatory of Music, San Francisco | |

| | |
|---|---|
| 08. Bienen School of Music, Northwestern University, Evanston<br>_Vocal Honors Program | |
| 09. The Shepherd School of Music, Rice University, Houston<br>_5 Year Honors Program | |
| 10. Peaboy Institute, Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore<br>_Honors Ensemble | |

| DANCE ACADEMIES, United States of America (onstageblog.com) | |
|---|---|
| 01. NYU Tisch School of the Arts, New York | |
| 02. The Ailey School, Fordham University, New York | |
| 03. Ann Lacy School of Dance and Entertainment, Oklahoma City University<br>_Honors Program (general) | |
| 04. The Juilliard School, New York | |
| 05. Point Park University, Pittsburg<br>_Honors Program (general) | |
| 06. Jordan College of the Arts, Butler University, Indianapolis<br>_Honors Program (general) | |
| 07. Meadows School of the Arts, Southern Methodist University, Dallas | |
| 08. University of North Carolina School of the Arts, Winston Salem | |
| 09. University of Arizona School of Dance, Tucson<br>_Honors College (general) | |
| 10. The Sharon Disney Lund School of Dance, California Institute of the Arts | |

| THEATRE SCHOOLS, United States of America (onstageblog.com) | |
|---|---|
| 01. The Juilliard School, New York | |
| 02. USC School of Dramatic Arts, Los Angeles | |
| 03. The Theatre School, DePaul University, Chicago<br>_Honors Program (general) | |
| 04. NYU Tisch School of the Arts, New York<br>_The Honors Program in Theatre Studies | |
| 05. The University of Miami, Coral Gables<br>_The Honors Program (general) | |
| 06. Actors Studio Drama School, Pace University, New York | |
| 07. Syracuse University, New York<br>_Renée Crown University Honors Program (general) | |
| 08. Boston University | |

| | |
|---|---|
| 09. The University of Creative Careers, Savannah | |
| 10. Carnegie Mellon University, Pittsburgh | |

*Table 2: Profile of Honours Programmes at Dutch Universities for the Arts*

| | | Academy Minerva | Prins Claus Conservatory | Gerrit Rietveld Academy | ArtEZ | Willem de Kooning Academy |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Structure and logistics | extra-curricular | | ■ | ■ | ■ | |
| | integrated | ■ | | | | |
| | embedded | | | ■ | | ■ |
| Content and form | inter- and/or multidisciplinary | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ |
| | theory | | | ■ | ■ | ▫ |
| | research | | | ■ | | ■ |
| | societal issues | ■ | ■ | | | ▫ |
| | innovation | | | ■ | | |
| Partners | research centre | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ |
| | universities | | | ■ | | |
| | societal partners | ■ | ■ | | | |
| Selection | motivation | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ |
| | learning plan | | ■ | | | |
| | (artistic) vision | ■ | | | | |
| | competencie: creative ability | ■ | | | | |
| | leadership | ■ | | | | |
| | referent | ■ | | | | |
| | grade average | | | | ■ | |
| Future perspective | master | | | ■ | ■ | ■ |

| Colour Coding Explained | |
|---|---|
| ■ | The university explicitly states the characteristic in some detail on their website. |
| ▫ | The university mentions the characteristic, but either does not elaborate on it or arguable does not utilise it to its full scope as described in the literature. |

*Table 3: Profile of Honours Programmes at American Universities for the Arts*

| | | OTIS College of Art and Design | School of Visual Arts | The Art Institute of Boston | Rhode Island School of Design | Stanford University | California College of the Arts | Parsons School of Design | School of the Arts Institute of Chicago |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Structure and logistics | extra-curricular | | | | | | | | |
| | embedded | | | | | | | | |
| | acceleration | | | | | | | | |
| Content and form | interdisciplinary | | | | | | | | |
| | theory | | | | | | | | |
| | research | | | | | | | | |
| | critical thinking | | | | | | | | |
| | community building | | | | | | | | |
| | practise | | | | | | | | |
| | profession | | | | | | | | |
| Partners | interdepartmental | | | | | | | | |
| Selection | motivation | | | | | | | | |
| | portfolio | | | | | | | | |
| | written proposal | | | | | | | | |
| | essay | | | | | | | | |
| | creativity | | | | | | | | |
| | leadership | | | | | | | | |
| | grade average | | | | | | | | |
| Future perspective | master | | | | | | | | |

| Colour Coding Explained | |
|---|---|
| | The university explicitly states the characteristic in some detail on their website. |
| | The university mentions the characteristic, but either does not elaborate on it or arguably does not utilise it to its full scope as described in the literature. |

*Table 4: Positioning of Universities of the Arts in relation to the Literature on Excellence*

| | Students | | | Didactics | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | intrinsic motivation | need for self-management | cleverness | building community | providing "bounded freedom" | deepening academic competence |
| Academy Minerva (Hanze) | | | | | | |
| Prins Claus Conservatory (Hanze) | | | | | | |
| Gerrit Rietveld Academy | | | | | | |
| ArtEZ | | | | | | |
| Willem de Kooning Academy | | | | | | |
| OTIS College of Art and Design | | | | | | |
| School of Visual Arts | | | | | | |
| The Art Institute of Boston | | | | | | |
| Rhode Island School of Design | | | | | | |
| Stanford University: Honors in the Arts | | | | | | |
| Stanford University: Honors in Art Practice | | | | | | |
| California College of the Arts | | | | | | |
| Parsons School of Design | | | | | | |
| School of the Art Institute of Chicago | | | | | | |

| Colour Coding Explained | |
|---|---|
| | The university explicitly states the characteristic in some detail on their website. |
| | The university mentions the characteristic, but either does not elaborate on it or arguable does not utilise it to its full scope as described in the literature. |

[1] At the time of research and writing, Mariska Versantvoort was the coordinator of the Honours Programme at the Willem de Kooning Academy in Rotterdam (The Netherlands). Currently, she is working as a Ph.D. Candidate in the Department of Politics and International Studies at the University of Warwick (United Kingdom).

[2] Insofar as universities in the Netherlands abide by British spelling in their website descriptions, I use "honours programme" to refer to Dutch curricula and "honors program" when speaking of their US equivalents.

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*Paper*

# Education for the Gifted and Talented: Student teachers reflecting about autonomy, control, and pedagogical diagnostics in a self-designed workshop program for gifted schoolchildren

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**Abstract:**
In German schools, gifted education becomes more and more relevant, but it is still rare in universities. University students in teacher education especially have only few opportunities to develop their talents in special programs like honors programs. This paper presents the results of a project in which student teachers designed three workshops on the basis of their own interests and strengths and planned these with school teachers.
To begin with, an overview over the honors programs in Germany is presented. The control and development of pedagogical diagnostics are discussed by a focus group from the perspective of the trainee teachers who developed the workshops for gifted gymnasium (i.e. grammar school) students, including their reflection of the degree of autonomy they experienced. The evaluation data were analyzed by the method of qualitative text analysis (Kuckartz, 2016) with a focus on the categories 'autonomy and control' and 'pedagogical diagnostics.' The central topic is the experience of competence in these fields.

Keywords: Trainee teachers; autonomy; pedagogical diagnostics

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## 1. Introduction

Honors programs for university students and, in particular, for student teachers are hard to find in Germany. There are two reasons for this:

First, in German history, the term 'Begabung' is connected with National Socialism (Hoyer, Weigand & Müller-Oppliger, 2013), so there is an equation of gifted education on the one hand and fostering the elites on the other. This equation was shown in particular by institutions like the so-called 'Nationalpolitische Erziehungsanstalten'

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(abbreviated as Napola), in which the Nazis tried to educate the next generation of military leaders. This discourse continued for 70 years after World War II (Hartmann, 2004). Moreover, it seems to be true that, so far, there are few courses on offer attempting to address questions of social inequality. Since the 1980s, gifted education has become a more important topic for schools in both primary and secondary education (Fischer & Müller 2014). Right now, impulses from educational policy give schools more space to explore gifted education (Bundesministerium für Bildung und Forschung <BMBF> [Federal Ministry of Education and Research], 2018).

Secondly, honors programs for university students in Europe are often extra-curricular (Wolfensberger, 2015) and sometimes integrated into particular programs like grants or organized by foundations (BMBF, 2017).

When looking for university students in teacher education to serve as a target group of honors programs, it is important to be aware of the fact that this group is very diverse. They have different backgrounds and study different subjects at different school types so that the question arose: 'How is it possible to set up and offer a program that fits the group of student teachers?'

This paper discusses workshops that were implemented as a start of an honors program at the University of Muenster designed by student teachers for the students of a secondary school. This evaluation focuses on self-reports of the competences that the student teachers developed under the circumstances outlined above.

The workshops were developed in an obligatory course to be attended by trainee teachers in which they were engaged in gifted education at schools. Four student teachers participating in this course started the development of these workshops to gain insight into gifted education. These workshops combine school enrichment ideas with opportunities universities can offer their students.

Within this small-scale project, it is possible to describe how honors programs can be started in a university where such programs are not the regular form of teaching. Therefore, it was important to look at how the university students evaluated this arrangement and how they described the development of their competences in this field. The evaluation of 'autonomy and control' can give a hint about how university students feel in such a context. Moreover, 'pedagogical diagnostics' is an important point in teacher education which can be developed in such an honors program.

In the following, there will be a short overview of honors programs in Germany (section 2) and a specification of the research question (section 3). The methodological framework will give an insight into the workshops as well as the way in which this study was designed (section 4). Results will be presented in section 5 and discussed in section 6.

## 2. Honors programs in Germany

There are several definitions of giftedness in educational literature. In this study, giftedness is used in the broad sense of the word. Not only cognitive aspects are relevant for being considered gifted, but there are also socio-emotional aspects and, for example, creativity or

sensory-motoric aspects that can constitute giftedness. Thus, giftedness is not static but can be developed and should be considered a process. The interaction between a person and the environment is a matter of special importance for evolving giftedness (Fischer, 2014; Heimbach-Steins, 2013; Solzbacher, Schwer & Doll, 2012).

Universities as well as schools should be places for fostering gifted, motivated, and interested students. There are several aspects which might have to be addressed (Seitz, 2011) without disregarding differences (Hoyer et al., 2013). In higher education, individual fostering of giftedness and talent could be defined as a systematic pedagogical activity of lecturers aiming at fostering students' skills by spotting and acknowledging their resources and potentials, not only looking at their academic attainment but also considering the education of the whole person and her/his developmental potential (Rott, 2017).

In higher education, gifted and talented students can be tutored in special sessions in regular courses or in (extra-curricular) honors programs. 'To be a collegiate honors student implies a higher level of academic achievement than other students as well as the more challenging academic experience that comes with smaller class sizes' (Dailey, 2016, p. 151). In Germany, students may, for example, graduate in teaching German as a foreign language or in intercultural pedagogy and obtain a qualifying certificate (Wolfensberger, 2015).

## 3. Research Question

The overall research question of this paper is: How did the trainee teachers experience their participation in the self-designed workshops with the focus on describing their competence development? The main aspects to be investigated are the topics:
1) autonomy & control, and
2) pedagogical diagnostics.
Autonomy (Jang, Reeve & Deci, 2010) is one of the most important aspects (Kingma, Heijne-Penninga & Wolfensberger, 2018) in making honors programs work successfully. Students need to have the freedom to develop their own ideas and projects. Control seems to contradict the idea of autonomy and is linked with the institutions in which this project took place. Universities as well as schools seem to be institutions that limit personal opportunities (e.g. Foucault, 1994). Pedagogical diagnostics is important for trainee teachers' professionalization; later on, they are responsible for identifying the talents and gifts which the students bring to school, and they must teach them in a special way (Vidergor, 2015). The honors programs described here could be a place in which these competences could develop at an early stage of professionalization.

## 4. Method

The workshops are embedded in an accompanying school development research project that has been running since the summer of 2016. The secondary school (*Gymnasium*) where the workshops took place cooperated with the University of Muenster, aiming at promoting gifted education at this school. At the University of Muenster, the project is linked with educational research seminars (Rott, 2019). The students may also visit schools for observational studies. On the basis of talks with the school teachers, some trainee teachers developed the idea of planning workshops for students aged eleven to fifteen as an educational activity outside the regular classroom. Trainee teachers together with qualified teachers of the schools designed three workshops extending over three days, replacing the

regular classes in which the students from the participating schools could participate. The topics of the workshops originated from the trainee teachers' interest in fostering the school students' personal development. They decided to choose topics in which they have strengths or special interests. Four trainee teachers took part in this project. They organized three workshops, which ran parallel for three days:

- creating podcasts dealing with themes of personal interest
- adventure-based counseling
- football as a substitute religion

39 students from the school participated in these workshops.

***Procedure***

A qualitative research approach was chosen to analyze the trainee teachers' competence development via focus groups, which use the interaction of the participants having the same background to generate data (Flick, 2012; Mäder, 2013). They help to see 'what interviewees think about a concrete theme – what feelings, attitudes, reactions, and doubts they have concerning it – in a situation in which they can contrast their opinion' (Flores & Alonso, 1995, p. 84). In contrast to single interviews, focus groups can lead to a deeper or broader understanding because there is more interaction amongst the interviewees and they talk about differences and similarities (Macnaghten & Myers, 2006).

In focus groups, two aspects have to be considered. First, there is a specific topic; and second, all persons taking part must stick to this topic (Flick, 2012). The method is based 'on the therapeutic assumption that people who suffer from a problem will be more inclined to talk to others who share the same problem' (Flores & Alonso, 1995, p. 85). This is a useful point when conducting an evaluative study like the one at hand.

***Participants and collecting data***

All four female trainee teachers took part in the focus group and all of them were in the final stage of their regular studies. All of them took part voluntarily. The meeting of the focus group took 55 minutes. It was recorded and afterwards transcribed. The author of this text was the moderator of the focus group.

The interview guideline attempted to initiate a self-acting talk among the four women who were known to one another because of their participation in the workshops. The opening questions were: 'You all have participated in a three-day-workshop. How did it go? What was your experience?' Some additional questions had been planned in case the focus group did not go well. These questions might concern the learning gains or the differences in comparison with other experiences in academic studies.

***Categorization***

The data analysis was performed via Qualitative Text Analysis according to Kuckartz (2016). Therefore, the material was read intensely and the texts were categorized. The resulting categories were connected with special examples which help retracing the empirical work.

## 5. Results

Five categories were used in the analysis, which help to show the students' experience gained in the workshops. 71 codings were set. In this paper, a closer description of the

categories 'autonomy & control' and 'pedagogical diagnostics' is given. The other categories are general conditions, relational designs, and diversity of experience which cannot be discussed here due to lack of space. The defining examples are in table 1.

*Table 1. Defining examples of codings*

| **Category** | **Defining examples** | **Number of codings** |
|---|---|---|
| autonomy and control | *Well – this self-reliance in the planning process, that's what I said – I could do what I wanted to do or what I thought what was right to do concerning the students. What the students should learn in these days or what they should adapt and not what is in the curricula. Or the freedom in planning time and concerning the contexts. That was pleasant.* | 13 |
| pedagogical diagnostics | *In any case I learned – I haven't known the students [from school] before, one didn't know them at all – that it is meaningful to know the students while planning such a thing. For being able to assess them – how their competences are in a special field for being able to make a better plan – that's what I take with me out of the project.* | 17 |

***Autonomy and control***

Autonomy is an important concept students use when describing their experience in the workshops. They mention the execution of their ideas and control by school teachers accompanying the workshops or the project head from university.

The self-reliance concerning the planning processes (see table 1) offers the trainee teachers opportunities for creating their own project. Planning concerns the preparation, the development of one's own goals for the workshops, and questions about the realization of the program with the students attending a school. To say 'I could do what I wanted to do' is even more than that; for, being able to do what a student wants to do means that there are no boundaries or control and influence from the outside. The students can decide what the workshop should look like. The school curricula, which define if and when a topic has to be taught from such a boundary, is not to be found in this project. The freedom of planning and choosing content are also evidence of the freedom of decision-making.

A lack of control does not mean that there is no help if needed, as expressed by a student teacher: 'One could work independently and they gave us credit for creating the workshops. They let us do. But they were there when needed.' The self-reliance is supported by the school teachers trusting in the abilities of their learners. The school children are also not alone and have support if needed. Another point is that the workshops are learning situations without assessments to be conducted by the university students: 'And that ones' [the university students] are not evaluated every time in all these aspects. Concerning content, but also that there was none with us in class or what else.' There are two differences: There is no assessment of the product and there is no 'teacher' monitoring the situation in the classroom. For the trainee teachers, this situation is different from the ones which they usually have to deal with in other projects.

Concerning evaluation, the trainee teachers added critical comments. Finally, the students taking part in the workshops were to present their results to one another. The teachers wanted to take part in this presentation. 'Looking at this presentation at the end stressed us a bit, because we thought students have to show that they learned something. To be honest that was the only pressure we had. And I caught myself saying 'please don't say 'gaming' – that was – maybe one should have sold this in a different way.'

It is not just the students attending a school but also the university students who felt being rated by the teachers. It is important to show that the students learned something and so the presentation became a touchstone for the trainee teachers. 'Gaming,' as used in this context, evokes negative connotations and gives a hint of the appreciation of this performance area. The school students were supposed to learn something; they should not play games in the workshops. Freedom, as described above, gets lost a bit when the expected achievement is in focus. The pressure, experienced by the trainee teachers, is also passed on to the workshop participants, while also affecting all the other school students.

***Pedagogical diagnostics***

Pedagogical diagnostics is targeted at university students aiming at planning pedagogical activities. It is process-driven and includes personal development as well as changing the activities of learning groups and individual learners. Pedagogical diagnostics helps teachers find a flexible way of teaching. In the program, the university students did not know the participants beforehand: 'What was difficult, I guess, was not knowing the students [of the school] and that one was not able to guess: Have they heard about pedagogics? Do they have any experience in this field? Or that it's difficult to deal with it or that what we planned it's too easy for them.'

It is obvious that there is a gap between the planning of the workshops and the knowledge level of the school participants. The university students are not able to assess their prior knowledge or how to integrate their suggestions. That is where the success of the project depends on the level of difficulty of the tasks. The trainee teachers were not sure if the plan would be welcomed and if it would be feasible. During the workshop, the trainee teachers have to modify and adapt their procedures.

Another element is scheduling: 'The time scheduling was tough to call – some school students were working fast and finished after the fourth lesson, but some were slower and needed up to the sixth lesson.' This means that the school students make use of the structure of the workshops in different ways and that they require different lengths of time to finish their products.

The uncertainty of the school students working in the workshops stands in contrast to how they managed to progress during the project: 'That was very positive, because one didn't know – and that was an inhibition threshold at the beginning - and a little bit of anxiety – if it would really work – but they [the school students] reacted so positively. They were super-motivated. They reacted well. Just right at the first day we were surprised how well it worked. That was a good experience. To see how the students were engaged in what we wanted them to do.' "Inhibition threshold" and "anxiety" refer to trainee teachers'

insecurity right at the start of the workshops. However, the reaction given by the students concerning the workshops was positive afterwards and helped clearing the worries that the trainee teachers had had. The school students are described as motivated participants and the trainee teachers experienced that their plans worked.

The university students evaluated their workshops via the feedback of the school students. They focused on what the students had learned in the workshops. 'Well, it was awesome that they really took away things from the workshops. I was open-mouthed that they used so much.' The university students were astonished at what the school students said they had learned in the workshops. It seems to be more than had been expected.

The university students described their increase of competence in the area of pedagogical diagnostics when they talked about how important it is to know the students whom one is working with when adapting the activities of the workshop. 'In every case I learned that it is important to know the students when planning something like the workshop. That helps assessing their competence and skills in specific areas. In addition, it helps planning the time schedule. That's what I gained from the program.'

## 6. Discussion

How did the trainee teachers experience their participation in a series of self-designed workshops focusing on their descriptions of competence development? That is the core question. As the results, presented above, show, the university students' evaluation of the workshops can be classified as nuanced, showing how complex extra-curricular activities are. Considering autonomy and control, there is a need for balance. On the one hand, university students need a structure in which they can develop something; on the other, they require orientation as well as space for their development. The trainee teachers can be given an ongoing experience by conducting the workshops concerning pedagogical diagnostics. These could be useful looking into in respect to their future as teachers. Central aspects of diagnostics were discussed in the focus group.

The university students had the opportunity to position themselves and to describe their personal development. The self-reports were compiled in a social way because of the discussion in the focus group, which helped the students to review their experience in a critical way.

Concerning honors programs in Germany one could ask if programs like the workshops could be a starting point. There are only a few trainee teachers who can be reached with such a program. In a systematic way, it seems to be important to develop more ideas of this sort.

In the interest of teacher education, it would be a good idea to have more projects like the workshops discussed in this paper. Trainee teachers need to deal with students and colleagues later on. Honors programs could be a starting point to explore the field of practice in a specific way.

Further research should consider the schoolchildren and how they experience these workshops conducted by university students. The teachers in schools supporting such a project should also be integrated into the evaluation. The university teachers should be part of the evaluation, too. But, this seems to be realistic only when more programs of this sort are performed and more university teachers are involved.

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*Paper*

# Lessons learned in setting up an open access journal: the case of JEHC

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**Abstract**
This paper details the lessons learned in the process of setting up a new open access (OA) journal from scratch. The *Journal of the European Honors Council (JEHC)* was started in 2016, published its first issue in 2017, and is currently publishing its fifth issue. The development of *JEHC* is described in four phases: lead-up to the first idea (2015-2016), from first idea to first issue (2016-2017), professionalization (2017-2018), and increasing impact (2018-). Ten lessons learnt are detailed: (1) do a realistic needs assessment; (2) involve committed people with skills, passion, and time; (3) provide a low-barrier publication option; (4) identify and pick 'low-hanging fruit'; (5) get your basics organized; (6) invest time in technical knowledge; (7) professionalize in phases; (8) be transparent, open, and personal; (9) try to avoid monetary transactions as much as possible; and (10) printing can help. The main piece of advice to others wishing to start an OA journal is: inform yourself well before you start, but do not be afraid to learn along the way.

**Keywords**: open access publishing, journal; open access journal; Open Journal Systems; editorial workflow

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## 1. Introduction

The *Journal of the European Honors Council (JEHC)* is a young open access journal, which was started in 2016 and published its first issue in 2017. At the time of writing, it is publishing its fifth issue in total.

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Open access publishing is a topic receiving much attention and also a hotly contested issue in both politics and academia. While there is no universally agreed-upon definition of open access, even the most minimal of definitions refer to the notion that research literature should be freely available to read online (Van der Zee & Reich, 2018; Piwowar et al., 2018). Regarding the prevalence, an analysis shows that 45% of the articles published in 2015 were openly available (Piwowar et al., 2018). In political discussions, a slow move towards support of open access and the more broadly-defined open science is visible in recent years. However, many involved feel that progress is too slow, and, therefore, in 2018, Plan S was put forward by a coalition of national research agencies and funders from twelve European countries. Its main principle is that "with effect from 2021, all scholarly publications on the results from research funded by public or private grants provided by national, regional and international research councils and funding bodies, must be published in Open Access Journals, on Open Access Platforms, or made immediately available through Open Access Repositories without embargo" (ScienceEurope, 2018). Plan S (where S stands for science, speed, solution, or shock) causes much debate in politics, among publishers, and in the media. Among scholars, discussions on open science focus both on the ethical aspects and the practical aspects. In a recent piece in the journal *Publications*, Jon Tennant and 15 other scholars sum up the debate by drawing up a list of ten hot topics to address in scholarly publishing, ranging from the problem of predatory publishers to the monetary side of publishing (Tennant et al., 2019).

This contribution starts from the *practice* of open science rather than the debate on or *theory* of open science by reporting on the lessons learned in the process of setting up an open access (OA) journal from scratch. Setting up *JEHC* and developing it to its current state has been an eventful process and has brought about insights that may be of benefit to a wider audience involved in OA publishing, in particular those with similar plans to start OA journals or 'flip' existing journals to OA.

This paper is divided into four sections. After this introduction, we move to a case study of developing the journal in four phases. In the third section, we mention the lessons learned in the process, while in the fourth and final section, we discuss the possible broader implications of these lessons.

The authors of this article are the coordinating editor (author 1) and Editorial Board members (authors 2 and 3) of *JEHC*. In addition, author 1 is Secretary and author 2 is President of the European Honors Council, which publishes the journal.

## 2. Case description: developing the journal in four phases

In this section, we describe how the *Journal of the European Honors Council (JEHC)* was developed: from the context in which the first idea emerged to the situation at the time of writing, with publication of the fifth issue in progress. Interestingly, what turned into the first issue of the journal was not initially conceived of as a journal at all. Instead, it was intended as a publication of conference proceedings.

We see four phases in the development of *JEHC*: lead-up to the first idea (2015-2016), from first idea to first issue (2016-2017), professionalization (2017-2018), and increasing impact (2018-).

*Phase 1: Lead-up to the first idea (2015-2016)*
A first prerequisite for a new journal is a clear gap, a need for a new publication outlet related to a specific subject. *JEHC* focuses on talent development and honors programs in (European) higher education. This was and still is a relatively new field, in which a lot of developments are taking place and people are looking for information and connections. To understand how the 'gap' for *JEHC* was found, it is necessary to discuss the subject area of the journal in some more detail. The need for the journal was first made explicit in the research project Honors in Europe. This project was initiated at the Research Centre for Talent Development in Higher Education and Society at Hanze University of Applied Sciences (UAS) Groningen in the Netherlands, with the aim of mapping talent development programs in higher education - which are often called honors programs – around Europe [2]. The first phase of this project consisted of a mapping study carried out in 11 countries. This study was supported by the Sirius Program, a government-funded program running from 2008-2016, aimed at stimulating the development of talent development programs in the Netherlands. The research culminated in the book *Talent Development in European Higher Education - Honors programs in the Benelux, Nordic and German-speaking countries* (Wolfensberger, 2015), which was published open access at Springer Open in early 2015. Immediately after publication, the book started to be downloaded in large numbers. In total, it has since been downloaded over 90,000 times. This showed two things: first, that many people were looking for information on the subject; and second, the strength of making information available in open access.

In gathering the data for the research, people from the different countries involved clearly expressed both willingness to share information and interest in making international connections. One of the main conclusions of the book therefore was 'that international networks and national frameworks for honors education are mostly lacking. Focus in education for talented and motivated students is still on compulsory education in many countries. The setup of an international honors network in Europe could give a great boost to education for talented students' (Wolfensberger, 2015, p. 277).

This challenge was subsequently taken up by setting up the European Honors Council (EHC): a new European network around the subject of talent development in European higher education. The idea was floated at an international conference in Nijmegen (the Netherlands) in June 2015. Here, a core group was formed, which spent the academic year 2015-2016 preparing to open the EHC for membership: writing a mission statement and setting up a website. One of the aims of the EHC was formulated as 'creation and exchange of knowledge about honors programs' (European Honors Council, 2016). The EHC made its first presentation to the outside world at the conference 'Honors Futures' in Utrecht, the Netherlands, in June 2016. This was a large conference on honors programs and talent development in higher education, with hundreds of delegates from around the world in attendance. Here, the EHC opened for membership, which was and still is free.
In the run-up to the conference, some of the people involved in the first Board of the EHC were approached by the Utrecht conference organizers to take part in the review process of the contributions to the conference. It was in this process that the first idea of the journal came up. It was felt that the conference yielded an interesting and diverse set of contributions. An idea to publish some form of conference proceedings was mentioned.

While the conference organizers were supportive of the idea, they did not want to pursue this themselves. Then the idea came up to make it into a journal and to use the new organization EHC as publisher of the journal. The EHC Board had already concluded in its mission statement that a clear need was felt to have a publication outlet for new research about honors education and talent development. One and one made two; it was decided that the rich source of possible publications related to the Utrecht conference would be used to create the first issue of the *Journal of the European Honors Council*.
The argumentation for setting up the journal was straightforward: it clearly fitted the aims of the EHC and filled a gap, as focused publication outlets on the topic (in Europe) were lacking.

While there are different publications focused on talent development in education, these are mostly focused on programs for gifted children in compulsory education (primary and secondary education). Examples of such journals are *High Ability Studies*, *Gifted Child Quarterly*, or *Journal for the Education of the Gifted*. Research on talent development and honors programs in higher education sometimes ends up in one of these journals. Another publication possibility is formed by journals devoted to higher education in general, such as *Higher Education*, *Journal of Higher Education*, *Research in Higher Education*, *Studies in Higher Education,* or the *European Journal of Higher Education*. Thirdly, some research is published in journals devoted to education in specific fields. A final publication option is the *Journal of the National Collegiate Honors Council (JNCHC),* the main scholarly publication outlet of the American organization of undergraduate honors programs. In subject matter, *JNCHC* is most closely related to *JEHC*. However, *JNCHC* is mostly focused on American honors programs, even though it also regularly publishes articles from and to an international audience and has published special issues on *Honors around the globe*. New issues of the journal are first made available to the NCHC membership and then released to the public through a university repository. Over the years, *JNCHC* has proved a source of inspiration for scholars in honors education. Still, the need for a dedicated European-based journal in full open access was felt.

The consequence of the diverse range of publication options as described above has been twofold. On the one hand, researchers have often run into the problem that their contribution is considered outside the scope of the journal they send in to. On the other hand, scholars who try to keep up-to-date with developments in the field need to consult a wide range of journals. A dedicated open access journal on talent development in higher education was still missing in the European context.

*Phase 2: From idea to first issue (2016-2017)*
Both the President and the Secretary of the European Honors Council were among the group of reviewers for the Utrecht conference where the idea for the journal emerged. They brought the idea to the agenda of the next EHC board meeting. The ten Board members were enthusiastic and approved of the idea, although no budget was available, except for hosting a basic website. Based on the success of the open access availability of the book (Wolfensberger, 2015) which was at the basis of the EHC, it was taken for granted that the journal was to be published in open access.

The EHC Secretary then started working to get the basics right and, by doing so, assumed the role of coordinating editor. Main tasks were to set up an Editorial Board, decide on the types

of contributions for the journal, set up a peer review process, develop a publication template, and set up a basic website. Key resources in this process were made available through the Research Center for Talent Development in Higher Education and Society at Hanze University of Applied Sciences Groningen (Hanze). As the aims of the journal matched the aims of the Research Center, the coordinating editor, who works in the Center as senior researcher, could devote time to the development of the journal and draw upon the Center's knowledge, networks, and other resources.

The Editorial Board was first set up with four members who had been involved in the peer review process for the Utrecht conference: the EHC Secretary and President, as well as two recently retired experts on honors education, who were a professor and a senior researcher. From the EHC Board, members from Austria and from Belgium were recruited. A member from Germany was sought, but this took some extra time. One of the organizers of the Utrecht conference was included in the Board as guest editor for this specific issue.
The first discussion in the newly-formed Editorial Board focused on the types of contributions the journal would publish. It was already clear that the journal would publish research papers, but the need for an additional publication format was felt. Among the contributions for the Utrecht conference, a lot of interesting abstracts were found, which focused on good practices or preliminary research results. It was felt that contributions based on these abstracts would be interesting for the audience involved in talent development and honors in higher education, but was the new journal the right publication outlet? On the one hand, it would provide the journal with short accessible pieces that could possibly be of immediate use in education programs, while at the same time providing a relatively low-barrier option to publish. On the other hand, publishing such contributions could 'scare off' researchers wishing to publish full research papers, as it could be felt that the short contributions took some 'prestige' off of publishing in the journal. After some discussion through e-mail and Skype, the Editorial Board decided to offer a low-barrier publication option in the form of 'notes,' which were defined as short pieces (up to 1,000 words) reporting on good practices and/or preliminary research results. The notes would be handled by the Editorial Board, with one member made responsible for reviewing the contribution and, if accepted, guiding it towards publication along with the coordinating editor. Full research papers (up to 5,000 words) were to be peer reviewed, with two anonymous reviewers assigned by the coordinating editor.

Once these decisions were taken, a document detailing the editorial process and a publication template were prepared by the coordinating editor. Also, a basic website was set up by the coordinating editor, using a simple HTML-based template. A journal logo was also made, based on the EHC logo. The contributions were to be published in PDF files.

Then, the selection process of contributions to the Utrecht conference was set to start. It was hoped that a first round of selection on the basis of abstracts could be finished before the conference. However, this was too optimistic, as the conference was already about to start and there were over 100 abstracts to review. Therefore, it was decided that the selection would be made on the basis of both the abstracts and the presentations at the conference (insofar as the Editorial Board members would be able to see these). The conference was held in early June and all Editorial Board members attended and read through all abstracts. This took some time and also led to some discussions regarding the

publication potential of specific contributions. It was then decided to send out two kinds of invitations: one to send in a note, and one to send in a paper or a note.

Finally, by late October, decisions were made. Out of the 110 contributions, 25 were invited to send in a note and another 25 to send in a paper or note. In most cases, the invitation e-mail would include a specific message. Examples of such messages are: 'Please target your contribution at an international audience. It would be great if you could elaborate on the do's and don'ts of your approaches' and 'Please explicitly focus on the students' point of view and evaluate your experience.' In a few cases, authors were asked to team up with other contributors or to merge contributions. The invitations were sent through the Utrecht conference organization, who referred invitees to the e-mail address and the website of the EHC to reply. The people who reported interest to submit for publication received further instructions through the EHC. In total, 20 expressions of interest were received: 11 from among those invited to send in a note; and nine from those invited to send in a paper or note. In the end, nine out of 11 invited for notes sent in a contribution. From the nine invited for paper or note, five sent in a paper and two sent in a note. The peer review process was done by e-mail, with the coordinating editor as central point of contact for both authors and reviewers.

Finally, the first issue counted 18 contributions in total. The first two were introductions, to the new journal in general and to the special issue about the conference in particular. They were followed by five papers and 11 notes. The contributions were copyedited by the coordinating editor, prepared for publication in PDF format, sent back to the author(s) for verification, and finally published on the journal website as a PDF.

Interestingly, at no point in the process had the idea come up to charge authors an article processing fee. It was taken for granted that as little money as possible would be involved in the publication of the journal. However, with the first issue nearing completion, the issue of printing came up. It was strongly felt in the Editorial Board that presenting a printed issue would be important for the journal's development. Luckily, a small budget could be secured to publish the first issue not only online but in print as well. The idea was to attract attention for the new journal among a targeted audience by distributing the printed version among the visitors of the annual international honors conference in the Netherlands in June 2017, a year after the Utrecht conference. To make this possible, a cover for the journal was designed. The coordinating editor asked a graphic design student to do this for a small fee. In addition, the coordinating editor registered the journal at the National Library of the Netherlands, providing it with ISSNs for both the printed and online versions. The printed version simply consisted of the cover, four pages of front matter including a page with author guidelines, a call for contributions and a list of the Editorial Board members, and the bundled pdf files of the separate articles.

*Phase 3: Professionalization (2017-2018)*

By the time the first issue was ready, the second issue was already planned. This second issue was linked to the annual international honors conference in the Netherlands in June 2017, where the first issue was also presented. The organizers of this conference at Windesheim University of Applied Sciences welcomed the idea to collaborate with the journal to publish a special issue related to the conference, and two of the conference

organizers joined the Editorial Board. In addition, during the conference, room was made for a short official presentation of the journal, handing it over to representatives of American and Chinese honors education organizations. It was also offered to the conference delegates. In addition, the Editorial Board organized a work session on the future direction of the journal. The printed version was well-received by the participants of the conference and the work session yielded good ideas on content. Some expressions of interest to publish came in. The number of expressions was more limited than at the Utrecht conference, but this was not considered a great problem by the Editorial Board.

In the process of preparing the second issue, a professionalization process for the journal was also started. A professor from the United States and a researcher from Germany were asked to join the Editorial Board, strengthening the content of the journal. On the technical side, three main goals were set:

1. Get accepted into the Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ), as a sign of journal quality;
2. Ensure long-term access by applying a system handling DOI assignment and archiving;
3. Improve the editorial workflow and website.

This all served to make the journal more professional and less dependent on the person of the coordinating editor, who up to this moment was handling all technical issues regarding the publication process and website.

The three goals proved to be strongly interrelated. The coordinating editor inquired what was needed to make a successful application for inclusion in the DOAJ, which was perceived as a minimum 'quality mark' for open access publishing (Olijhoek, Mitchell, & Bjørnshauge, 2015). In fact, some prospective authors mentioned that their institution only allowed them to submit work to OA journals listed in the DOAJ. When looking up the application procedure, main items missing were an archiving policy and a licensing policy. To be able to get policies on this matter in place in a way that would not require manual work by the coordinating editor upon publication of each contribution, it was clear that a system for the editorial process was needed. The coordinating editor went on a search among other open access journals and found out that the ones not tied to a big publisher were often using Open Journal Systems (OJS). This open source system, which already launched its first version in 2002 (see Willinsky, 2005), offers both a system to handle the editorial workflow and a website. Other journals were already published successfully on OJS, both new ones and existing ones that had made the switch (see for example Botsford & Haggerty, 2010). OJS is developed by the Public Knowledge Project (PKP) as freely available open source software, which in the opinion of the coordinating editor, fits well with an open access journal, and, in the words of Botsford & Haggerty 'can mean the difference between existence and non-existence' (2010, p. 9).

After informing himself about OJS, the coordinating editor set up a test environment on his personal webspace. For the installation, this required some help from a friend with more technical knowledge. However, once installed, it seemed to work well. In a Skype meeting with the Editorial Board, the new system was introduced and the Board agreed to test the

environment for the publication of the third issue. In the meantime, the second issue was finished through the old system.

The test did show some problems with the automated messages from the system reaching the reviewers, and the automated replies from the system reaching the authors. Still, in general it was felt that the new system was a major improvement and should be implemented. However, the test installation on personal webspace did not solve the problem of the publication process being dependent on the person of the coordinating editor. Therefore, contact was made with the media department at Hanze. Institution-wide decision makers had already shown enthusiasm for the initiative taken in the Research Center for Talent Development in Higher Education and Society at Hanze to publish an open access journal. The question from the coordinating editor was if Hanze would be willing to host the journal and handle technical issues. Soon, it was clear that a decision on this issue would take some time. The third issue was therefore finally published through the old system.

After taking some time to consider the request and consulting the IT department, the Hanze media department managed to secure some funding from the institution to host the journal as a pilot project in open access publishing. An important factor in this consideration was the fact that Hanze was in the process of developing a new open science policy for the whole institution. One additional piece of support by Hanze was the provision of Digital Object Identifiers (DOIs). Hanze decided to become a member of Crossref and received its own prefix for the allocation of DOIs, which could be used by the journal.
The media department at Hanze finally decided not to host the journal itself, but to buy a hosted solution from PKP, the developers of OJS. By July 2018, the installation was complete, including an option to automatically assign DOIs to newly published articles. Also, automatic archiving was secured through the hosted solution and the registration at the National Library of the Netherlands. This meant that the fourth issue of the journal could be completely handled through the new system, which provides much more clarity about the editorial workflow for authors, reviewers and Editorial Board members, as well as a much better-looking website.

In addition, the installation of OJS meant that everything was in place for an application to the Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ). This was also delivered in July 2018. With the application to DOAJ under consideration, the 'back catalogue' of the journal, consisting of the first three issues, required some work. These issues had to be placed in the new editorial system and website, and they needed to have DOIs assigned. The deliberate choice was made not to assign DOIs for the articles in these issues before, as the implementation of OJS was in progress. Assigning DOIs to the back catalogue had to be handled manually, requiring a one-off time investment by the coordinating editor. In October 2018, this process was finished, and all authors of contributions in the first three issues were informed that a DOI had been assigned to their article; and they were asked to refer to these DOIs from then on.

*Phase 4: Increasing impact (2018-)*
By autumn 2018, the three main goals of the professionalization phase were reached. The new website was up and running, and the editorial process for the fourth issue was handled completely through Open Journal Systems. The USA-based Editorial Board member had been

able to set up copyediting by a native speaker, significantly improving the contents of the journal. On the technical side, DOI assignment and archiving were integrated into the editorial system through OJS. In September 2018, *JEHC* received the message that it was accepted into the Directory of Open Access Journals.

This meant that a new phase started for JEHC, where attention shifted to increasing the impact of the journal. The journal was already indexed by Google Scholar. The introduction of DOIs and the use of OJS made it easier to see statistics on an article level. However, getting representative statistics still proved difficult. The 'back catalogue' remained available on the old journal website, and articles had been and are continually being placed in scholarly social network sites such as ResearchGate, as well as repositories on institutional and (inter)national levels. While this increases the chances of making impact with the journal's contents, at the same time, it is harder to keep track of the impact that is being generated. Indications are that total numbers of downloads per article are in the hundreds rather than thousands.

Therefore, the new phase shifts focus towards developing new ideas on 'journal marketing.' This includes widening the pool of potential authors and further developing special issues on topical issues in honors education and talent development. It is felt in the Editorial Board that special issues are a good way to specifically target both potential authors and readers, while, at the same time, there should also always be room for articles not directly relating to the subject of the special issue but to the journal subject in general.

The fourth issue was a special issue on good practices in honors education and was finally published in January 2019. At the time of writing, publication of a fifth issue without a specific theme is underway, and a call has been out for contributions to the sixth issue. This will be a special issue on 'honors education in the digital age' and is set to be published early 2020. The seventh issue will focus on contributions to the International Conference on Talent Development and Honors Education 2020, to be held at Hanze UAS in Groningen, the Netherlands in June 2020.

**3. Lessons learned**

The process of setting up *JEHC* was eventful. Some things went well, but mistakes were also made. The ten main lessons learned in the process are detailed below.

*1. Do a realistic needs assessment*

Before starting a journal, a clear idea is needed in relation to the question of added value. Are there enough potential readers for the new journal, and are there enough scholars willing to publish? In the case of *JEHC*, we did not do specific research into this, but the need for a journal focusing on honors and talent development in higher education had already become clear through the research project Honors in Europe, for which contacts were made with over 300 higher education institutions in 11 European countries and in the set-up process of the European Honors Council. We felt that there would be enough potential readers among this group. We could have given more thought to the potential authors. As the first two issues were set up in relation to existing conferences, this was not an urgent point. However, it became clear in the preparation of the third and following issues that spontaneous contributions to the journal still remained relatively rare. The issue of journal

marketing to potential authors could have been taken up more seriously earlier in the process.

*2. Involve committed people with skills, passion, and time*
Setting up a journal requires skills, passion, and time. While a lot of the skills can be developed along the way, key people for the journal need to be able to work together constructively and see the fun in developing a new publication outlet. A dedicated team of Editorial Board members with complementing skills and a passion for the journal subject is crucial. Then, a sense of community can develop, in which people help each other to overcome the problems in technical and other areas which a new journal undoubtedly encounters. In the case of *JEHC*, committed people with complementing skills were found. It certainly helped that the coordinating editor (author 1) has a background in journalism and editing. The President of the European Honors Council, who is also the professor heading the Research Center for Talent Development in Higher Education and Society (author 2), brought in the knowledge and resources of her Center, her extensive networks, and experience with a wide range of publications. In addition, it was extremely helpful that two recently retired dedicated experts (a professor - author 3 - and a senior researcher) agreed to join the Editorial Board. They were willing and able to invest time in the journal, provide input and feedback on both content and editorial procedures, and were well-connected with possible authors. Their efforts and experience proved very helpful in setting up the journal. The other Editorial Board members each added their own useful input. In the starting phase in particular, people need time to discuss the basics of the journal and to process the first contributions. Editorial Board members were willing to devote this time outside regular working hours.

*3. Provide a low-barrier publication option*
In the case of *JEHC*, a clear need for sharing good practices and preliminary research results was identified. To provide for this need, we established the contribution type of 'notes.' This turns out to be a popular type. In the four complete issues published at the time of writing, three out of every four contributions turn out to be notes (see table 1).

*Table 1. JEHC types of contributions per issue*

| **Issue** | **Papers** | **Notes**[1] | **Total** |
|---|---|---|---|
| Vol 1, issue 1 | 5 | 13 | 18 |
| Vol 1, issue 2 | 2 | 6 | 8 |
| Vol 2, issue 1 | 3 | 4 | 7 |
| Vol 3, issue 1 | 1 | 10 | 11 |
| *Total* | *11* | *33* | *44* |

[1] *Issue introductions are published as notes and included here*

When setting up the journal, the first subject discussed in the Editorial Board was whether the introduction of 'notes' would scare off authors wishing to publish full papers in a prestigious journal. It is still not entirely clear if this is the case, but it is possible, seeing as there is a relatively small number of full papers. We recommend publication formats to be a subject for serious and early consideration when setting up a new OA journal.

*4. Identify and pick 'low-hanging fruit'*
In many fields, there is a possibility to link publications to events such as conferences. In the case of *JEHC*, a deal was made with the current and future organizers of an annual international conference on honors education in the Netherlands, enabling the journal editors to get in touch with people submitting contributions to the conference to consider submitting for the journal as well. This proved a great way to get in touch with authors with promising contributions and invite them to submit to the journal.

*5. Get your basics organized*
While, in our experience, you do not need a perfectly organized journal before you start (see lesson 7), it is essential to get a number of basics organized before the publication process starts. This includes a good description of the scope of the journal and having a (basic) Editorial Board, as well as having a description of the review and publication processes and licensing info (see 6). This is needed to provide clarity to all involved: potential authors and also your Editorial Board. Additionally, you need someone to take up the role of coordinating editor or Editor-in-Chief as the main contact point for both authors and Editorial Board members.

*6. Invest (some) time in technical knowledge*
Involving a person with some technical knowledge is essential when setting up an open access journal. This includes knowledge on the technical details of the editorial process, as well as about hosting and licensing. If this knowledge is not available within the Board itself, help could be sought at the libraries of institutions to which Editorial Board members are attached. As these are often supportive of initiatives in open access publishing, they could provide valuable information and possibly resources. In the case of *JEHC*, we relied mainly on the technical knowledge of the coordinating editor in phases 1 and 2, and then on the additional technical knowledge at Hanze in phase 3. Looking back, this help could have been sought earlier in the process. One basic piece of technical information we clearly missed was knowledge about licensing. While the Editorial Board was clear that we wanted to publish our journal in full open access, none of the members were really familiar with the licensing involved. Therefore, in our first two volumes, we did communicate to authors and in the journal front matter that the publication was in full open access, but we did not include any licensing information in the articles published. When we entered the phase of professionalization, we corrected this and started publishing under a CC-BY license. This was also clearly indicated to authors on the journal website and in the submission process, as well as in the PDF file of every single article.

*7. Professionalize in phases*
One main lesson for others wishing to set up an OA journal is that, in our experience, it is not necessary to wait until everything is set up perfectly (see also 5). In addition, it is possible to change rules and procedures as you progress into publication of next issues. For example: initially we said that 'notes' in *JEHC* should count a maximum of 1,000 words. When preparing the first issue, it soon became clear that this was too tight, and maximum note length for the next issue was set at 1,500 words. Again, this proved to be too tight for some contributors, who said they had to make compromises on quality due to the word limit. Discussion among the Editorial Board resulted in a clear focus on quality over word count.

Therefore, currently, a maximum of 1,500 words is suggested but not strictly applied. The same goes for full papers – the maximum of 5,000 words is now also suggested.
At the time of writing, the journal is starting a new professionalization phase, now with regards to what could be called 'journal marketing.' While it would have been useful to have focused on this earlier, priorities had to be set because of limited time and the choice to delay this is still supported in the Editorial Board.

*8. Be transparent, open, and personal*
When you set up a new journal, others will usually understand that not everything is running perfectly from the start. Transparency is key in this. We recommend to make it clear to (potential) editors, contributors, and readers that your journal is new and that you are open to suggestions for improvement. In our experience, this helps in getting people into a mindset where they are not mere 'customers' or consumers of articles but where they actually help co-create the journal. One important aspect in this is personal communication. It helps if you use personal(ized) messages as much as possible, so contributors understand that the journal is prepared by dedicated people.

*9. Try to avoid monetary transactions as much as possible*
In the case of *JEHC*, basically no money was available at the start of the journal. The initial decision was taken not to charge authors an article publication fee. Also, none of the Editorial Board members would receive compensation of any kind. In fact, the coordinating editor invested a tiny bit of his own money to claim a URL and start a website for the journal (which was later reimbursed by his employer). In our experience, the fact that it is clear that you are not 'in it for the money' provides you with goodwill with your audience of both potential authors and readers. In the *JEHC*'s case, Hanze (the institution where the EHC secretariat is hosted and where the coordinating editor is employed) was willing to provide hosting and technical support. The Research Center allowed the coordinating editor to put in some work hours and provided an important network for both feedback on content and support on practical issues. It also helped to secure a small budget to print the first three issues. Cost models of OA journals are a much-debated topic. However, the limited dealing with money at JEHC is in line with practices at some other OA journals. For example, the *Journal of Open Source Software* recently published a blog explaining in detail their cost model for running an online open journal (Katz, Barba, Niemeyer, & Smith, 2019). Still, *JEHC* does not have a structural budget.

*10. Printing can help*
While scholarly publishing takes place in an online world, we did find that having a printed version of the journal was helpful in both getting more attention for the journal and in being taken seriously by some important people. The first issue was printed and handed out officially at the international conference at Windesheim UAS, which formed the basis for the contents of the second issue. The second and third issues were also printed and handed out at an international conference in the next year. In these cases, the (acting) President of the EHC handed over the journal to the Director / Rector of the institution hosting the conference, creating an official moment attracting attention. This would have been more difficult to achieve without a physical (printed) journal. The future in print for *JEHC* is still subject to debate in the Editorial Board. As the journal does not have a structural budget (see 9), the money needed for printing has to be found for every single issue. While this is

not practical, one advantage of this process is that the decision to print is taken consciously, with a clear idea in mind about the added value of printing that specific issue.

**4. Discussion**

Setting up an open access journal from scratch is not easy. However, the difficulties you will undoubtedly encounter in the process should also not be overestimated, and it is rewarding to see results.

By reporting on the process of setting up the *Journal of the European Honors Council (JEHC),* we aim to inspire others to do the same. We share the lessons we have learned, which boil down to a main piece of advice: inform yourself well before you start, but do not be afraid to learn along the way. It is important to note that open access publishing generally implies an open, positive, and supportive atmosphere. Many librarians and technicians are willing to help, and there is often goodwill among prospective authors and readers. This makes setting up a new open access journal a process in which there is much to learn in a positive atmosphere, with fun to be had along the way.

In addition, it can be a very inspiring process in a broader sense. Being involved in the practice of open access publishing can help to show its added value, bringing new arguments to open science-related debates that are sometimes in danger of remaining relatively abstract.

For those aiming to start their own OA journal, it would be useful to have more case studies available of initiatives that have or have not been successful. Combining such case studies, an analysis could be made of both the common elements perceived as success factors and the elements that are specific to the field addressed by the journal.

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