



The Teaching-Research Nexus

A guide for academics and policy-makers
in higher education

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Examples from Australian universities

Student-Lecturer Collaborative Community Focused Research Activities

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Broad discipline area:

Arts and Humanities

- Cultural Studies

Year level:

- Various year levels

TRN strategy:

- Teaching-informed research
- Lecturer-student co-production of knowledge
- Linking research, community engagement and teaching
- Drawing on your own (and colleagues) research in designing and teaching courses

Teaching and learning context:

- Student-lecturer research collaboration
- Field trips
- Community engagement

Brief description of the initiative:

This academic views teaching as action research, since student projects have generated many of his own research questions and projects. He deliberately fosters a collaborative approach to research activities and estimates that 50% of his research has arisen from teaching experiences and collaboration with his students. As this academic has a strong focus on community engagement, all units involve field trips, and assignments require students to apply their learning to the community.

Examples of lecturer-student co-production of knowledge:

- In a Cultural Studies unit *Space, Place and Travel*, with typical enrolment numbers of 100, in the Bachelor of Arts program, students apply theories about place and space to their own community contexts. They go on field excursions in their local area and undertake a community-focused research project. The academic gave an international conference paper about student projects for this

course in 2000. This led to an interdisciplinary group of academics at the university writing a book about the local area (Offord, 2003), which is now used as the textbook for teaching *Space, Place and Travel*. This academic wrote one chapter that reflects his in-class teaching and the different topics that students in the course had researched. In this chapter, the academic investigates notions of 'belonging' and community at two local sites: Caddie's Café of Lismore and the Byron Lighthouse Reserve Walk. The book, which demonstrates the nature of a community-focused research project, is also used as an example of good practice in the final undergraduate research course, where students use it as a model to write up their own research project. In this way, students see the reciprocal relationship between teaching and research. Through their learning experiences and engagement with the course, the students see that they have been the catalyst for this academic to write journal publications, conference papers and book chapters.

- This academic and his PhD student co-wrote a book chapter about the history, research and pedagogy that went into developing the Australian Studies subject *Australia, Asia and the World*. The chapter is used as the first reading in that subject to give students an understanding of its historical context. Papers written by postgraduate students are incorporated into the readings for the course and PhD students give guest lectures. Thus, teaching and research linkages are infused throughout the course, and cutting-edge research is included.

Reference:

Offord, B. (2003). Mapping the rainbow region: Fields of belonging and sites of confluence. In H. Wilson (Ed.), *Belonging in the rainbow region: Cultural perspectives on the NSW North Coast* (pp. 41-62). Lismore, NSW: Southern Cross University Press.

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