



The Teaching-Research Nexus

A guide for academics and policy-makers
in higher education

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Examples from Australian universities

Small-Scale Digital Research Tasks Catering for Students with Diverse Motivations, Interests and Needs

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Broad discipline area:

Creative Arts

- Digital Writing

Year level:

Range of undergraduate and postgraduate year levels in the same class

TRN strategy:

- Building a small-scale research activity into undergraduate assignments

Teaching and learning context:

- Computer labs
- Learning to learn/lifelong learning
- Online/blended learning
- Assessment item

Brief description of the initiative:

This lecturer, who teaches elective courses in digital writing and digital art to students with a range of majors (mostly as part of a Bachelor of Arts), year levels and technological skills, sets generic research assignments that students can work on in different ways. A typical class of 25 students includes undergraduates across the year levels as well as several Masters students with up to 20 different career goals. Some students have very little previous computing experience, while others may have studied programming. The courses are structured to run as three-hour workshops in computer labs consisting of mini-lectures and independent computer-based research activities with the lecturer giving students' individual attention as required.

This lecturer sets applied assessment tasks that are relevant to students' needs. For example, students in *Creative Interactivity* write hypertext research essays (interactive, multimedia format) on a topic of their choice. Final year students are encouraged to write their assignment on how they can find a job in their chosen field while other students choose topics relevant to their current interests. Similarly,

students in *Digital Publishing* create and publish a net-based journal, magazine, special interest community site or online gallery depending on their goals outside the classroom.

This approach benefits the students, as despite their differing goals, they are able to engage in activities that will enhance their future career. Students also benefit from this lecturer's approach to teaching and learning. He aims to develop students' ability to undertake independent online research, encouraging them to 'learn how to learn'. Rather than teaching students how to use software that will quickly become obsolete, this lecturer tells them where they can access information on how to use new software. Students therefore develop self-management strategies so they can teach themselves how to use new technologies as they are developed.

For further details:

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