



The Teaching-Research Nexus

A guide for academics and policy-makers
in higher education

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Examples from Australian universities

Linking Teaching and Research in Economics

Professor John Freebairn
The University of Melbourne

Broad discipline area:

Management and Commerce

- Economics

Year level:

- Second year undergraduate

TRN strategy:

- Design learning activities around contemporary research issues

Teaching and learning context:

- Large group lectures
- Small group tutorials
- Assignment/Assessment

Brief description of the initiative:

This Professor currently teaches a core subject for second year undergraduate students, *Intermediate Microeconomics*, which is taken in the second year of the Bachelor of Commerce program, with typical enrolment numbers of 500 students. Over the years he has taught at all year levels, from first year undergraduate through to masters coursework programs. He incorporates research into his teaching in various ways, generally in an attempt to increase student engagement in the course. By raising students' awareness of the research being undertaken in the field, the students learn how to analyse and think about issues in the way that economists do.

Given the nature of the field of economic policy, there are many issues, such as taxation, unemployment, water and climate change, that are often in the public domain, which the lecturer links to his lectures. This Professor has also based assessment on the effects of carbon tax, which is one of his research interests. While the students do not take classes at this level in research methods, the skills of research are incorporated into the existing course to some extent. For example, in the essay on carbon tax, the students need to build a model to answer the essay question.

This Professor also builds research into the tutorials, and regards the tutorial as an opportunity to get students to work together to generate solutions to problems posed.

As this subject caters for about 500 students, with 250 students in each lecture, the tutorial groups of 18 makes it more manageable for students to be divided into smaller groups to work on current research issues. Such issues include how labour supply responds to changes in wage rates and taxation, social security systems, or childcare allowances.

For further details:

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