



## The Teaching-Research Nexus

A guide for academics and policy-makers  
in higher education

[www.trnexus.edu.au](http://www.trnexus.edu.au)

### Examples from Australian universities

---

#### **Enhancing The Teaching-Research Links in the Microbiology Honours Program: Developing a course unit outline**

Dr Stephen Turner  
The University of Melbourne

**Broad discipline area:**

Natural and Physical Sciences

- Microbiology and Immunology

**Year level:**

- Honours

**TRN strategy:**

- Draw on personal research as you design and teach courses
- Involve students in departmental research projects

**Teaching and learning context:**

- Assignment/assessment
- Student/lecturer research collaborations
- Research laboratory work
- Curriculum design
- Mentoring of individual students

**Brief description of the initiative:**

This Senior Lecturer is one of the honours coordinators for the *Microbiology Honours Program*, which is taken in the Bachelor of Science (Microbiology) program, with typical enrolment numbers of approximately 20. He is in the process of redesigning the coursework component of the honours program. The program is 75 percent research and 25% advanced coursework. The aim is to provide a generic structure that will encourage academics involved in the honours course units to follow principles aimed at strengthening the scientific research component of the coursework part of the program. Academics teaching the honours course units will be given the option of choosing what aspect of cutting edge research they wish to incorporate. In doing so, academics are more able to draw from their own research interests in their teaching. While the honours research project that students undertake is a common example of linking teaching and research, this academic's focus is also aiming to strengthen the links between teaching and research in the first semester of the honours course.

Students have three pieces of assessment: a mini grant application, an essay which focused on identifying problems in a current research papers, and a news and views article. All three pieces of assessment are designed to help students develop research skills such as communication skills, being able to conduct a literature review, and critical analysis skills.

This academic has also trialled inviting guest speakers to speak to honours students about their area of expertise, which was also the area of research that students were learning about at the time. These speakers are contacts he has made through his research work. Furthermore, he has also encouraged a similar strategy for other academics recruited to help teach the course work component of this subject. This initiative will be used again in the future. Where possible, students are encouraged to consider preparing their honours research thesis for submission for publication, with the help of their supervisor.

**For further details:**

Dr Stephen Turner  
The University of Melbourne  
sjturn@unimelb.edu.au