



## The Teaching-Research Nexus

A guide for academics and policy-makers  
in higher education

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### Examples from Australian universities

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#### **Building Small-Scale Research Activities into a Third Year Contemporary Arts Course**

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**Broad discipline area:**

Creative Arts

- Music and Performance: Musicology

**Year level:**

- Third year undergraduate

**TRN strategy:**

- Building a small-scale research activity into undergraduate assignments
- Designing learning activities around ‘real world’ research applications
- Teaching research methods, techniques and skills explicitly within subjects

**Teaching and learning context:**

- Assessment item
- Group/team work

**Brief description of the initiative:**

*Politics and Communities* taken in the third year of the Contemporary Arts course involves two assessment items that have a research component. The course is interdisciplinary and is studied by students undertaking a number of programs including a Bachelor in Fine Arts, a Bachelor of Music, a Bachelor of Performance and a Bachelor of Electronic Arts with typical enrolment numbers of 150.

As arts practices take place in a social and political context, the course is designed to draw attention to socio-political structures and associated communities and their relationships to the emergence of artistic expression. The course’s primary objective is for students to “develop a capacity to deeply question the relationship between art and politics”.

**Essay Assignment**

- Weighting = 50%
- Length = 3,000 words

Students have the option of either writing an investigative essay on a prescribed topic or devising their own research question, in consultation with one of the lecturers, and conducting their own research-based learning project. The research project must relate to the purpose of the course. This lecturer's primary research interest, Gender's influence on music, has influenced her students' choice of topic.

Examples of students' research projects:

- An investigation of whether or not women's participation in hard-core metal music, normally a male domain, has changed the genre. Students undertake a literature review of the research field, compile data from secondary sources and obtain their own primary data using interview, survey or questionnaire as an instrument, and compare their own findings with those reported in the literature.
- An investigation of whether or not women were as successful as men (as reported in the literature) at making a career of being a popular musician. Women were surveyed to find out if they advanced beyond performing in hotels on a casual basis to recording their original compositions and touring to make music their career.

### **Artistic Project Proposal: Creative Exploration and Documentation**

- Weighting = 50%
- Length = 2,000 words

This assignment prepares students for a 'real world' activity they will engage in after graduation. In groups, students prepare an application for an artistic project which they present to fellow-students during tutorials. Each group member also individually submits a written proposal.

Assessment Guidelines:

- Research, prepare and present a proposal for an arts (performance, art, music) project constructed around the notions of the arts, politics, communities, and social change;
- Identify the issue/problem to be addressed;
- Present one or more strategies for addressing the issue/problem, and discuss the resources require to mount the project;
- Discuss the context, location, and funding of the project;
- The group presentation can take the form of either a pitch for a project and/or brief presentation demonstrating the central ideas or strategies behind the project;
- Individually submit a written form of the proposal one week after the group presentation.

### **For further details:**

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