



The Teaching-Research Nexus

A guide for academics and policy-makers
in higher education

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Examples from Australian universities

Academics Infusing their Teaching with the Values of Researchers in a First Year Contemporary Arts Course

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Broad discipline area:

Creative Arts

- Music and Performance: Musicology

Year level:

- First year undergraduate

TRN strategy:

- Infusing teaching with the values of researchers
- Drawing on your own (and colleagues) research in designing and teaching courses

Teaching and learning context:

- Large group lectures
- Curriculum design

Brief description of the initiative:

Lecturers use their own practice or their own research to illustrate the theory underpinning *The Past in the Present* unit which forms part of the Contemporary Arts course. Typical enrolment numbers are 90 music students (from the Bachelor of Music) and others from a range of Arts majors including the Bachelor of Fine Arts, Bachelor of Performance and Bachelor of Electronic Arts. A typical total enrolment in this course exceeds 200 students.

This introductory theoretical course provides an interdisciplinary view of the arts and presents key critical terms and conceptual models for examining the contemporary arts. It does this by examining some of the ideas and historical circumstances that have helped shape the contemporary fields of music, performance, electronic arts and fine arts. Cultural issues that inform research in contemporary arts practice are considered without imposing a single unifying theory.

The course introduces the values of researchers. Students are encouraged to:

- View knowledge as provisional
- View the discipline as dynamic and evolving
- Understand the importance of analytical rigour

To this end, readings from recent research studies are compared with more historical research in the field to facilitate critical evaluation of the studies' findings and conclusions. Through this process, students are introduced to the view that concepts, understandings and research problems are construed differently depending on researchers' theoretical perspectives.

During the semester students are introduced to the research of a range of academics. The Unit Co-ordinator gives the first three lectures while other members of the teaching team deliver the remaining 11 lectures. The teaching team includes permanent staff members who represent the various disciplinary areas being taught, invited guests from the industry and other academic institutions, and PhD students enrolled at UWS and other local institutions.

Practising artists who teach into these units will typically present their own work alongside other practitioner's work with whom their work resonates and show the relationships between their work and others in the field. For example, they might:

- address cultural issues, such as those to do with gender, the environment or war and terrorism, showing the ways in which their work articulates these concerns
- show how new media including digital media, the internet, web.2 sites and mobile phones have impacted on their practices.

While some students have commented that they found lectures in disciplines outside their own disciplinary focus to be irrelevant, on the whole the Student Feedback Questionnaires (SFQs) have been positive.

For further details:

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