



The Teaching-Research Nexus

A guide for academics and policy-makers
in higher education

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Examples from Australian universities

Peer Assessment of Creative Work in a Popular Music Program

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Broad discipline area:

Creative Arts

- Popular Music

Year level:

- Across all undergraduate year levels

TRN strategy:

- Infusing teaching with the practices and values of researchers
- Lecturer/student co-production of knowledge
- Teaching-informed research: making evidence-based decisions about curriculum design

Teaching and learning context:

- Assessment item
- Reflective learning
- Learning to learn/life-long learning

Brief description of the initiative:

In *Popular Music Production* the major study of a Bachelor of Popular Music [described in Popular Music 1], students earn 20% of their grade for their effectiveness as panel members assessing fellow students' portfolios of recorded work. Panels consist of one staff member and seven or eight students from all year levels. As each panel considers submissions across year levels, first year students are involved in assessing the work of second and third year students.

Panellists mark each track in the students' portfolios by applying explicit criteria and standards and provide a paragraph of feedback. All panellists' views have equal weight i.e. the marks awarded by the staff member are given the same weighting as those of each student panellist.

A staff member assesses the student panel members on their written performance as panellists. Marks relate to the quality of the feedback and how well it meets the

expectations of the course. Punctuality, quantity of feedback and the coherence between the commentary and marks awarded are also taken into account.

This peer-assessment of students' recorded work reflects the values and practices of researchers in several ways:

- Students and staff form a community of practice in which the collective abilities of the students and staff form a valuable learning resource. This mirrors the aims and outcomes of academic research communities of practice.
- This peer-assessment process parallels the peer-review journal publication process. Students learn the value of seeking feedback, learn to make their own judgements about the usefulness of the feedback they receive and to act on selected elements of the peer feedback just as academics do with the feedback they receive from journal article reviewers.
- The peer assessment procedure formalises 'real world' practices as it utilises the kinds of processes that popular musicians use informally to develop their work.

Evidence of effectiveness and impact:

This initiative was evaluated through both informal consultations with students and formal evaluation of the standard of written assessment items and evaluation tasks. Students were treated as partners rather than subjects in the development of the process and asked to provide input at all stages.

One of the claimed benefits of peer assessment is its potential to enhance both students' self-monitoring skills and their ability to make judgments about their progress relative to criteria and standards. The relationship between the self-assessment of students and the marks awarded by peer panels has been monitored and provides support for this claim. As students progress through the program the correlation between the marks awarded by the panels and students' self-assessment improves. The close relationship between the marks awarded by the course convenor and those awarded by the panels is a second indicator of the effectiveness of the initiative. This suggests that students are qualified to conduct fair and reliable assessment (for more details of evaluation of this initiative see Lebler, 2005)

Reference:

Lebler, D. (2005). The master-less studio: An autonomous education community. *Journal of Learning Design*, 1(3), 41-50. <http://www.jld.qut.edu.au/>

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