



The Teaching-Research Nexus

A guide for academics and policy-makers
in higher education

www.trnexus.edu.au

Examples from Australian universities

Research Considerations for Student Assessment in Urban Planning

Professor Robert Freestone
University of New South Wales

Broad discipline area:

Architecture and Building

- Urban Planning

Year level:

- Fourth year undergraduate

TRN strategy:

- Design learning activities around contemporary research issues
- Infuse teaching with the values of researchers

Teaching and learning context:

- Assessment (Assignment)
- Reflective learning
- Real world learning
- Group/team work

Brief description of the initiative:

Integrated Planning 3 – Master Planning, is taken in the fourth year of the Bachelor of Planning Program with typical enrolment numbers of 40. This subject focuses on planning frameworks for the delivery of quality urban outcomes on complex major development sites. The primary aim is for students to acquire a working knowledge and skills for planning and development using techniques of Master Planning. This is an increasingly common technique in planning practice as government and the development industry strive to create more liveable and sustainable communities. The subject introduces students to the theory, processes, techniques, and politics of master plans. The focus is more than physical and other aspects covered include social capital, economic appraisal and due diligence. Students workshop the development of a draft Master Plan for a real world development site. As the third in a series of ‘integrative planning’ projects, the subject enables students to synthesise knowledge and skills acquired in other subjects and to a level suitable for assessment by practitioners.

The preparation of a master planning document is a group activity worth approximately 50% of the total assessment. An appreciation of the values of research in this subject is inculcated in a lead-up series of individual tasks. These are more calculatedly geared to consideration of research needs arising during the conceptual and early planning stages of integrated residential community development. The focus of these sessions during the first third of the subject is to more reflectively consider theories *of* planning as opposed to theories *in* planning. Students are asked to think beyond immediate practicalities to issues such as why there is a need for the planned communities, what forms they have assumed over time, their meanings, and are their actual performance in socially, environmentally and economically sustainable ways. The assessment for this component requires students to complete an assignment in which they analyse these issues with reference to scholarly texts and critical assessments rather than industry planning documents. These insights from research fold into and inform the generic skills developed and refined during the actual master planning exercises.

For further details:

Robert Freestone
Faculty of the Built Environment
University of New South Wales
r.freestone@unsw.edu.au