



The Teaching-Research Nexus

A guide for academics and policy-makers
in higher education

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Examples from Australian universities

Collaborative Practice-Led Research in a Visual Arts Program

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Broad discipline area:

Creative Arts

- Visual Arts (printmaking)

Year level:

- All undergraduate year levels

TRN strategy:

- Practice-led research
- Infusing teaching with the values and practices of researchers
- Drawing on your own and colleagues research in designing and teaching courses

Teaching and learning context:

- Small group classes
- Studio workshops
- Reflective learning

Brief description of the initiative:

Research in the Visual Arts is practice-led as studio practice is itself a form of action research. The research process involves experimentation in the studio and refinement of studio practices. Practice raises questions that can be investigated through research, which in turn influences artistic practice. In this discipline area, the practitioners' research output is manifest through exhibition, performance or installation.

At this university, staff members are themselves practising artists, exhibiting locally, nationally and internationally. They model innovative practice-led research in their own artwork. The practice-led research methodology is incorporated into the academics' teaching methods. Their experience and understanding of their own practices influences their teaching. Teaching is infused with the values of practice-based research, as staff model studio-led self-awareness of the practice, innovation and knowledge of where their practice fits in a particular context. While students are encouraged to read journal articles and books, the focus of teaching at all year levels

is on understanding contemporary practice by looking at examples of work and practice. Thus, students' attendance at exhibitions and visits to galleries is a form of research. Teaching has a contemporary edge as academics actively maintain current knowledge of the field to ensure that students are well informed about contemporary practices and use current national and international examples in the curriculum. In this way the latest practices are taught and students' research output (exhibited work) is closely connected to the content of the curriculum.

Collaboration among faculty and students is encouraged. Academics share their knowledge and the curriculum is designed collaboratively, drawing on the experiences of the group. The staff members team-teach wherever possible, visiting and providing input in one another's classes. Staff members also produce collaborative trans-disciplinary projects. Students are encouraged to attend staff exhibitions and to discuss and provide feedback on staff members' artwork.

This collaborative practice-led environment engages students and produces graduates who:

- are confident and articulate about discussing their own work;
- have experienced peer review and critique, giving and receiving feedback on one another's work;
- are aware of and understand the diversity of artistic practice;
- can discuss methodology of practice;
- have developed their own studio-led practice.

This academic reports that her understanding of practice has been greatly influenced and enhanced by the experience of teaching and by recognising the ways people learn.

For further details:

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