



The Teaching-Research Nexus

A guide for academics and policy-makers
in higher education

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Examples from Australian universities

Experimental Animal Behaviour: A research-based third year subject

Associate Professor Raoul Mulder
The University of Melbourne

Broad discipline area:

Natural and Physical Sciences

- Zoology

Year level:

- Third year undergraduate

TRN strategy:

- Building a small scale research activity into assignments

Teaching and learning context:

- Assessment (Assignment)
- Practical experiments
- Inquiry-based learning methodology
- Group/team work

Brief description of the initiative:

Experimental Animal Behaviour is taken in the third year of the Bachelor of Science (Zoology) program, with typical enrolment numbers of 60 (quota-restricted). Students work in groups of four in this semester long course. Each student group has a supervisor, who is either a member of academic staff or a postgraduate student. Students use a particular animal group, such as possums, geckos, magpies and bees to address a question about animal behaviour. The student group decides on a question they want to answer, design their project, undertake data collection and analysis, prepare a written report on the data, participate in peer review of their fellow students' reports (see example Zoology 2), verbally present the results of their project, and prepare a final written report. Students are expected to work together on this project in a time that suits them. Tutorials occur throughout the subject to give students tips on working together as well as the key pieces of assessment during the semester, eg, oral presentation. Student feedback indicates that the course is highly regarded.

“The Experimental Animal Behaviour subject is probably the best subject I have done at this University.”

For further details:

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