



The Teaching-Research Nexus

A guide for academics and policy-makers
in higher education

www.trnexus.edu.au

Self-Review Framework for Faculty/Departmental/School Heads

This self-review framework is for academic staff members who have leadership and/or policy roles in their Faculty, Department or School are the target group for this set of questions. This may include Course/Program Coordinators, Associate Deans (Teaching and Learning), Associate Deans (Research) as well as School, Departmental and Faculty Heads.

The purpose of the instrument is to raise awareness of the various dimensions of the teaching-research nexus (TRN) and to encourage academic leaders to consider ways in which they might make effective links between discipline-based research, learning and teaching across year levels and disciplines.

You do not need to answer all questions. We suggest that you:

- a) start by skimming through the six dimensions below so that you are aware of the range of ways in which the TRN might have a role to play in learning, teaching and policy-making;
- b) then focus on an area(s) of particular interest and relevance to you, your teaching programs and your department.

1. The TRN and University Policy

- Does your university have a stated view on how it conceives the teaching-research nexus?
- If no, would it be helpful to do so? What would be useful to include?
- If yes, could it be improved to be more comprehensive/ useful?

2. Fostering the TRN Through Policy and Practice

- In what specific ways does the Faculty/Department/School's learning and teaching strategy articulate research and teaching links?
- In what specific ways does the Faculty/Department/School's research strategy articulate teaching and research links?
- In what specific ways does the Faculty/Department/School's community engagement strategy articulate research and teaching links?
- In what specific ways is the TRN visible in strategic documents and implementation plans for the Faculty, and for Schools and Departments? (e.g. Teaching and Learning Plans, performance review, promotions/reward/ recognition measures, course and curriculum documents, QA documents)
- Is there a specific job role or individual in the Faculty/Department/School with responsibility for advancing teaching-research linkages?
 - Are such positions formally mandated or informally assumed?
- What strategies do you use to develop a TRN culture that links research outputs and high quality teaching practice in the department?
- Are all researchers in your Faculty/Department/Schools involved in teaching?
- In what ways are 'non research-active' teaching staff mentored and encouraged to develop (a) a research/scholarly discipline-based approach to teaching e.g. by revising curricula and teaching materials to incorporate current research findings/controversies and (b) a research/scholarly approach to teaching and learning pedagogy?

- In what ways do research teams and course teaching teams link with each other? How specifically are these links facilitated?
- In what specific ways is research into teaching being supported in your Faculty/Schools/Departments?

3. The TRN and the Curriculum

- In what specific ways is TRN manifested in units and courses? (e.g. through outcomes, processes, assessment items, use of specific learning methods like enquiry-based learning)
- Are there any Faculty/Departmental/School strategies for linking individual TRN activities at course level to ensure appropriate scaffolding/progression across the levels?

4. Supporting, Rewarding and Recognising Staff

- What staff development mechanisms exist to enhance the capacity of staff to (1) link discipline-based research and teaching and (2) engage in research about teaching and learning and to ensure that their knowledge, as it relates to undergraduate and postgraduate teaching, is current?
- In what ways are staff rewarded for engagement with the TRN? (e.g. part of performance appraisal, specific TRN awards, specific reference to the TRN in promotion criteria)

5. Engaging Students in the Departmental Research Culture

As you respond to these questions, you may wish to clarify whether you are referring to all students or a particular year level/cohort.

- In what specific ways is the Departmental/Faculty research culture and activity made visible to students?
- How are students made aware of the research activity in their departments? (e.g. through guest lectures, site visits)
- What opportunities do undergraduates have to participate in departmental research projects (e.g. as research assistants) and to disseminate their research findings and activities? Do you believe this is possible for first year students?
- What opportunities are there for students to become involved in the TRN outside formal courses? (e.g. through research seminars, 'observer' roles in research teams)
- In what specific ways is the TRN used to induct students into your disciplines' values, practices and ethics?

6. Monitoring and Evaluating the TRN

- In what specific ways is the TRN embedded in systems for approval and review of courses/subjects?
- In what ways is the TRN implementation monitored and evaluated within undergraduate and postgraduate teaching?
- How is the staff and student experience of the TRN monitored? How are results fed back into policies and practices?
- In what ways is work on the TRN in your Faculty/Department reported to the main university committees?
- What strategies do you use to assure the quality of teaching-research linkages in your local context? (e.g., do you benchmark your practices with other institutions?)