Link research to teaching

What is it
- Students learning the methods used by researchers in their discipline
- Academics sharing research discoveries with students
- Students engaging in cutting-edge research
- Academics researching approaches to learning and teaching

Why use it
- Introduce students to material at the forefront of the discipline
- Encourage students to become part of the community of scholarship
- Teach students to become independent researchers/learners
- Students report being more engaged

How to use it
- Establish research projects early in degree course
- Use established University resources, and introduce students to them
- Provide students with opportunities to guide their own learning
- Explore ways to develop the most effective teaching and assessment methods
How to... link research to teaching

What is it
Linking research and teaching is a fundamental aim of the University. The 'Research/Teaching Nexus' describes the various ways in which research and teaching can overlap, inform, and guide one another through four broad approaches: 1) teaching students how research is undertaken within the discipline (RTN3); 2) sharing new discoveries and theories with students (RTN2); 3) actively involving students in research activity, either independently or in association with their lecturers (RTN4); and 4) undertaking pedagogical research on how best to engage students in their learning and assessment (RTN1). When appropriately adapted for your discipline, all four of these approaches can increase student engagement and enhance the effectiveness of lessons. There are probably examples of these approaches already in place.

Why use it
Students are not always aware of how the research underpins their education, but many are keen to be a part of the University's community of scholarship. Linking research and teaching is a way to allow them to do so, and to discover new ways to share your discipline and insights with them. When clear links between research and teaching are established, students are likely to be more engaged with their studies. Studies show that students find it particularly interesting and inspiring to be taught theories that are at the cutting edge of their disciplines, even more so when the lessons come from the person doing the research. There is also a wealth of information at the University on ways of delivering research material – including group research projects, vodcasts, and Personal Response Systems.

How to use it
There are several familiar techniques for engaging students in research and there is a wide range of different approaches that can be built into your own practice available through Learning and Development. There are also a variety of interesting ways to introduce research projects early in degree schemes: the School of Philosophy and Art History have a year-long, assessed research project as part of the core first-year module, and Computer Science and Electronic Engineering run a unique group research project; the Department of Sociology has recently started running a module in which students use information from the UK Data Archive in their assignments, and Language and Linguistics students are exploring Escala, the University’s collection of Latin American art, in their coursework.

Tip: There are many ways to link research and teaching. Why not consider enrolling on Essex’s Post Graduate Certificate in Higher Education Practice (PG CHEP) as a way to learn more? E-mail ‘ldev’.

Tip: Research can be a good way to develop student employability; many students may need the link with critical thinking and managing their research to be made an explicit part of the exercise.

Tip: Using resources like the Data Archive or Escala can encourage original thinking in student assignments (and reduce plagiarism) as there is likely be less secondary information for students to draw upon.

Look out for more postcards in the series, e-mail Learning and Development (‘ldev’) or visit the website (‘/ldev/resources’).