



The Teaching-Research Nexus

A guide for academics and policy-makers
in higher education

www.trnexus.edu.au

Examples from Australian universities

Use of *MySpace* and vUWS (Blackboard) for Student-Led Collaborative Research

Lecturer James Arvanitakis
University of Western Sydney

Broad discipline area:

Arts and Humanities

- Cultural Studies

Year level:

- First year undergraduate

TRN strategy:

- Designing research activities around contemporary research issues
- Lecturer-student co-production of knowledge

Teaching and learning context:

- Online/blended learning
- Assessment item

Brief description of the initiative:

This academic uses two different online communication forums to engage students in collaborative discussion and research.

vUWS (Blackboard)

The academic maintains an official course site, which includes resources such as:

- Course documents
- Lecture notes
- Tutorial discussion summaries
- Sample essay questions
- Tips on how to pass assessment items
- Links to relevant websites
- Lecture podcasts
- Staff/student photographs

As part of the course requirements, each student is assessed on their participation in tutorial discussion, based on their engagement with the material presented in lectures and readings. Each student is expected to lead a tutorial group discussion on an

allocated topic and provide at least one informal presentation. Students are then required to post key points from the discussion on vUWS.

MySpace

This academic uses his *MySpace* site to interact with students and engage in collaborative teaching and learning activities. He uses *MySpace* to post up-to-the-minute material that is not available in textbooks and seeks students' responses.

His *MySpace* site includes:

- Bulletins
- Music
- Personal blogs
- Diaries
- Essays on philosophy and sociology
- Pictures and videos
- Web links

The academic welcomes student input into this informal interactive environment. In a form of research-led interaction, he encourages students to post web-links to relevant articles they have found as part of their research.

This academic considers that some students respond to the interactive nature of *MySpace* more positively than they respond to the official course web site. He views *MySpace* as an accessible platform that provides technology-enhanced education in a public environment where lecturer and student can communicate about national and international issues. In his opinion, *MySpace* offers a more interactive format because of its public access status and the ease with which students can contribute information.

For further details:

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<http://www.myspace.com/heyjamesa>