

Placing progressive research pathways through program curriculum

Jacinta Ryan

RMIT University, Melbourne, Australia
Jacinta.ryan@rmit.edu.au

Sandra Jones

RMIT University, Melbourne, Australia
Sandra.jones@rmit.edu.au.

The need to graduate students with the knowledge and skills required to meet the research requirements of industry requires identification of how students can progressively develop these skills. Based within the context of conceptual discussion and empirical case studies of the teaching-research nexus, the authors undertook a desktop audit of a selection of current Australian institutional experience of developing research skills. The aim was to identify evidence of the how student skills are progressively developed. Analysis of the outcomes of the audit revealed an emphasis on designing curriculum for single courses' rather than through progressive development over a programme of studies. Assessing this against the conceptual framework adopted for this paper, a focus on research content rather than research processes and problems was found in which students are treated as 'audience' rather than 'participants'. The authors conclude that, despite recognition of the need to scaffold research skills progressively through pathways across an entire programme of studies that engages students in research, there is little evidence that this is occurring. Based on these findings the authors propose a more holistic, collaborative approach to the design of progressive pathways for students to develop research skills. The collaborative element requires engaging academics and professional staff with responsibility for curriculum design in Communities of Practice. The authors welcome further research to explore this conclusion further.