



info

notes + stuff

research log

Practice Research

https://iaspmjournal.net/index.php/IASPM_Journal

Where are we now?

When it comes to our student offers, practice ability/experience is prioritised over academic ability. Essay writing, and skills required for this, is judged on writing in personal statement and academic achievements. Therefore, the range in essay writing skills is vast, and many of the students we accept have anxieties of writing, actively dislike writing, and have little experience of writing in an academic context compared to their 'practice' experience. Essay writing is supported and developed in the thread of theory-based modules as follows:

Popular Music

L4 - Music Cultures & Economies 15/120 CATs

L5 - Music & Sound Studies 15/120 CATs

L6 - The Research Project 30/180 CATs

60/420 - ~15%

Music Business

L4 - Music Cultures & Economies 15/120 CATs

L5 - Music & Sound Studies 15/120 CATs

L6 - The Research Project 30/180 CATs

60/420 - ~15%

Sound & Music Production

L5 - Music & Sound Studies 15/120 CATs

L6 - The Research Project 30/180 CATs

45/420 - ~10%

TLDR Our students get accepted because they are good at 'doing' music, not because they are good at essay writing. And when they get here, they focus on developing their practice further.

Current Research Project model:

- Allows for in-depth investigation of topic of choice
- Exposes students to research repositories and a variety of research methods
- Allows students to contextualise their skills/interests within theory and develop critical analysis skills

But also:

- Independent learning element feels like a big leap from L5 to L6
- Continued misunderstanding of research project, in relation to essay/dissertation, because of lack of engagement with examples
- Difficult to convince of relevance in industry, leading to a lack of motivation
- Lack of familiarity and regular use of and regular use skills required

Why Practice as Research?

- Remove barriers to getting started
- Method of research will be more accessible
- Examples will be more relatable
- It provides a clear bridge between professional practice and research
- Allows students to understand & articulate practice in terms of knowledge structures

What it will consist of...

practice research - an umbrella term that describes all manners of research where practice is the significant method of research conveyed in a research output. This includes numerous discipline-specific formulations of practice research, which have distinct and unique balances of practice, research narrative and complementary methods within their projects.

research narrative - in a practice research output, a research narrative may be conjoined with, or embodied in, practice. A research narrative articulates the research inquiry that emerges in practice.

Create a compulsory reader that will contribute towards their independent learning hours.

This should be read before the first session, could this be set for over the summer?

What is knowledge?

Ethics concerns

What is research?

What is practice?

Set up a publication

Annual journal

Anything 50+ gets in.

Reinforce the idea that this is good

What is practice research?

Practice research is when practice is the significant method conveyed in a research output. All research involves practice, of one sort or another, be it the practice of writing, experimenting, or any other practical method of undertaking a research project.

Where practice research differs from 'traditional' research fields is that the practice itself is foregrounded as the significant method of a research output.

This approach accords with Robin Nelson's *Practice as Research in the Arts* (2013): "The practice, whatever it may be, is at the heart of the methodology of the project and is presented as substantial evidence of new insights."

Understanding the relationship and distinction between practice and practice research is of crucial importance when discussing practice research. Excellent practice may not necessarily translate into excellent practice research, and vice versa. For practice to be practice research the research has to be articulated. As artist and researcher David Cotterrell describes: "I think there is probably, within all practice, some form of enquiry, it's not always something which is articulated to the point where it can claim space as practice research." For Cotterrell, practice research is "about actually trying to reveal something of the intention and the search, as much as describing the result." Researcher and performance theorist Ben Spatz describes practice research as "understanding your practice in terms of its knowledge structures."

Practice is the work of real-time cultural extension and transformation. The ways of knowing that emerge in practice are shared in practice research through a research narrative.

It is the real-time, 'in-the-game' nature of practice that provokes difficulty in formulating cross-sector guidance for practice research. In practice research, researchers outline what is happening when they 'do' practice and this may involve any number of unique and bespoke methods that can be conveyed by a research narrative.

Ten years later, the Research Assessment Framework 2014 (REF 2014) guidelines offered a new definition of research, as “a process of investigation leading to new insights, effectively shared”.

Practice research is where knowledge becomes knowing, actioned through practice: a “reflection-in-action,”⁵¹ that develops new ways of knowing. Put simply, knowing ‘what’ is important, knowing ‘how’ is crucial. Practice is an experiential mode of inquiry that when located in a research framework, as practice research, reveals insights and understandings that expand our capacities for knowing.

Ways of Knowing in Practice Research

‘Making sense’ is a central aspect of knowing: this is not only a sense making, but also a sensory exploration: practice is an active method of research that acknowledges each practitioner’s unique perspective.

Research Narratives

All practice research includes or embodies a research narrative, where practice is the significant method of research in a research output. Practice research is both practice and research narrative, as one output (not necessarily as two separate elements).

For the vast majority of practice research outputs, it is not possible for research audiences to experience the practice first hand, and as a result ‘documentation’ is employed as a proxy for practice. In recent years, the meaning of the term ‘documentation’ has become blurred, shifting from simply representing practice, toward a collective term, often describing both practice and research narrative together, and hence acting interchangeably with the term practice research itself. We urge caution in this blurred use of the term, particularly given the vital utility that ‘documentation’ has in defining surrogate materials for practice. Within practice research, documentation can act as the surrogate for the occurrence of practice, with a research narrative often providing further context and explanation.

Within these reports we employ the term ‘research narrative’ to illustrate the articulation of a research inquiry in practice research. Alongside practice and/or its documentation, the whole is the practice research output.

Practice research outputs where the sheer length, complexity, or verbosity of language used made the research inaccessible. There is a fear, acknowledged by many of our interviewees, particularly in the Arts, that by accepting the use of simple language forms drawn from traditional research fields, artistic legitimacy will be brought into question. Teamed with this is the common desire to seem ‘academic’ as Hill observes: “there’s a lot of work that needs to be done to produce a succinct piece of work, and actually it’s often easier not to [...] but I think part of this is ‘academic language’, and this desire to make things look academic.” Brown emphasises the need for practice researchers to adopt simple and accessible forms of language: “I think the simpler the language, the more powerful the proposition. What you don’t want to do is explain a little idea in big words. You want to explain a big idea in little words.”

A practice research output, as practice and research narrative, may be shared in any item type or format: text, performance, film, sound recording, audiovisual, software, etc., as long as it conveys the research inquiry. As Reimer puts it: “you can use whatever medium you want, as long as you find something that’s suitable.”

[Practice as Research]

Practice-based research is an original investigation undertaken in order to gain new knowledge, partly by means of practice and the outcomes of that practice. (Candy and Edmonds, 2018: 63)

Research through practice is less a method than a series of approaches which place the creation of media and culture at the centre of the research process. It requires practitioners to reflect on their work and thereby contribute to our understanding of the process of production themselves. This method often reflects changes in the media, exploiting new methods and modes of creating the media. (O'Neill and Roberts, 2020). Robin Nelson stresses the importance of documentation in research through practice (Nelson, 2013), while Barrett and Bolt argue that 'through the vehicle of exegesis, practice becomes theory generating' (Barrett and Bolt, 2010: 33). For some researchers, it may be that the work tests a theory or hypothesis, but it is through the work or reflection on the work that we reach new insights.

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