

DISSECTION IN AUSTRALIAN SCHOOLS

Every year, countless animals are dissected in classrooms across Australia, including rats, mice, pigs, chickens, frogs, toads and fish. Some animals are specifically raised for dissection, which contributes to a loss of lives. Even the use of animal parts from slaughterhouses assumes that an animal's life is expendable. Of concern, using animals in science at a formative stage of education establishes the legitimacy of animal models in science, rather than challenging how knowledge and skills be acquired in a more ethical way.

The approval process for the inclusion of dissection in the curriculum differs between states and territories. Generally, the conditions (which animals may be used, from what suppliers, for what purpose, the quantity of animal per student etc.) are subject to approval by a state-wide animal ethics committee, but there are exemptions to this.

No education department in Australia has made dissection compulsory and students are entitled to submit a conscientious objection without penalty. Student choice policies permit students to choose study methods that do not involve the harming or killing of animals.



A rat dissection can be a confronting experience for students.
Photo credit: Edu Supplies

Dissection is the cutting apart or separating of tissues of a preserved animal specimen. High school biology classes may involve dissection.

What's wrong with dissection?

- *It causes animal suffering and death*
- *It may dissuade caring and empathetic students from a career in science*
- *It's expensive — you can dissect an animal only once*
- *It's unnecessary — there are alternative teaching methods available*
- *It may be traumatic for students if they feel coerced into participating*
- *Students may play around and joke with their peers about the animal specimens rather than focus on learning*
- *It creates biological waste*

Harmful animal use is not the best way to learn.

There are many limitations to dissection. Alternatives can show the continuous processes of life, such as how a heart beats, that dissection cannot, via interactive, sensory experiences. Alternative exercises offer the advantage that they can be repeated and therefore students can control their own learning at their own pace and repeat tasks until they gain proficiency.

Can the same learning outcome be achieved without animal dissection?

A recent study found that in 90% of studies, humane teaching methods were as or more effective than harmful animal use in achieving desired learning outcomes (1). These results are clear—there is no valid educational reason for continued harmful animal use in education and training.

(1) Zemanova, M.A.; Knight, A. The Educational Efficacy of Humane Teaching Methods: A Systematic Review of the Evidence. *Animals* 2021, 11, 114. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ani11010114>

Alternatives to dissection

Dissection was introduced in the 1920's. Since then, more sophisticated tools have been introduced which provide a better learning experience, cost less and don't kill animals!

Motivated students learn well by using their textbooks, but for hands-on, interactive investigative experiences, a range of free and low-cost digital and other alternative resources are available for all dissection exercises. HRA has a limited range of alternatives available on loan via our Humane Education Loan Program (HELP).



*The SynFrog is designed to replicate a live female frog.
Photo credit: PETA*



The HRA HELP kit.



The Froggedia app.

Want
to
learn
more?

1

Access a template student choice policy
www.humanersearch.org.au/student-choice-policy

2

Read our campaign page
www.humanersearch.org.au/say-no-to-dissection

3

Search for alternatives to dissection and view HRA's HELP.
www.humanersearch.org.au/humane-education