

Programme - This is subject to change

Interdisciplinary Learning and Teaching Conference 2026: Interdisciplinary Pathways: Engaging Learners and Creating Opportunities

Start Time	Duration	Reception	Room 2.55	Room 1.50	Room 1.60	Room 1.55
9:00	30 mins	Arrival: Tea, coffee, refreshments				
9:30	45 mins	<b>Opening Plenary</b>	<p>Welcome from the Edinburgh Futures Institute, University of Edinburgh, Professor Marion Thain, Director EFI</p> <p><a href="#">Making Space to Daydream</a> – Helena Good, Managing Director, Daydream Believers</p>			
10:15	15 mins	Changeover break				
10:30	20 mins		<p><a href="#">Designing Sustainability at Scale: A Collaborative Model for Interdisciplinary Learning</a> – Annabel Robson and Michelle Feng, University of Manchester</p>	<p><a href="#">Enabling Interdisciplinary Learning within Discipline-Based Curricula</a> – Esra Kurul and Lucy Turner, Oxford Brookes University</p>	<p><a href="#">Caatinga-ing the curriculum: roots of an anticolonial perspective</a> – Igor dos Santos Mota, University of Derby</p>	<p><a href="#">Collaborating Across Boundaries: Co-Creating Sustainable Finance Learning Between Academia and Industry</a> – Patricia Perlman-Dee, University of Manchester</p> <p><a href="#">Identifying the Intergenerational Possibilities of Interdisciplinary Collaboration</a> – Danielle Cameron, London School of Economics and Political Science</p>
10:50	20 mins		<p><a href="#">Crossing Boundaries in Interdisciplinary Design: people, place and pedagogy</a> – Rafe Hallett and Olga Mourouti, Middlesex University Dubai</p>	<p><a href="#">Statistics as a Bridge, Not a Barrier: Designing Interdisciplinary Pathways in a Data Science Classroom</a> - Mengxing Joshi, University of St. Andrews</p>	<p><a href="#">Reimagining English for Specific Purposes as a Creative, Interdisciplinary Space in Agricultural and Forestry Education</a> - Dian Islami Prasetyaningrum, University of Limerick</p>	<p><a href="#">Interdisciplinary opportunities to embody health and wellbeing practice through literacy and numeracy related pedagogical content knowledge</a> – Alison Murray and Nuzhat Uthmani, University of Stirling</p>

						<a href="#">Teaching Criminological Theory Through Interdisciplinarity: A First-Year Case Study in Critical Thinking</a> – Evelyn Svingen, University of Birmingham	
11:10	20 mins		<a href="#">Supporting interdisciplinarity in PhD programmes: What happens after the grant is awarded?</a> – Katrine Ellemose Lindvig and Pelle Boers, University of Copenhagen	<a href="#">Teaching Data Science to Diverse Learners as an Interdisciplinary Practice</a> – Serveh Sharifi and Stuart King, University of Edinburgh	<a href="#">Beyond Pedagogy: Navigating Organisational and Strategic Challenges of Interdisciplinary Education</a> – Antonios Kaniadakis, Brunel University of London	<a href="#">Interdisciplinary graduate outcomes: the link between effective cross-functional collaboration within the university and interdisciplinary graduate success outside it</a> – Anna Matei, London Interdisciplinary School  <a href="#">Standing out from the crowd: What perspectives do students have about their identity when enrolled in a distinctive postgraduate multidisciplinary program?</a> – Jay Rixon, Mary Keys and Lorna Sibbett, The Open University	
11:30	15 mins	Morning break: Tea, coffee and refreshments					
11:45	20 mins		<a href="#">Guardians of the Layered Learning Galaxy: A Spiral Model for Health Care Education</a> – Ailsa Dollard, University of Lancashire	<a href="#">Thinking as Craft in the Age of Generative AI: A Process-Oriented Approach to Epistemic Fluency in Liberal Arts Education</a> – Coco Kanters, Utrecht University	<a href="#">Interdisciplinarity as Student Agency in Course Development and Direction</a> – Christopher Shoop-Worrall, University of Manchester	<a href="#">Mapping Boundary Crossing Mechanisms in Postdigital Interdisciplinary Learning at the Edinburgh Futures Institute: A Core Elective Comparative Case Study</a> – Kunqi Huang, University of Edinburgh  <a href="#">Are we teaching information or developing understanding?</a> – Maximillian Afnan, London School of Economics and Political Science	

12:05	20 mins		<a href="#">Collaboration to create an interdisciplinary track of large-scale shared education for disciplinary bachelor programs at a Humanities faculty</a> – Rianne van Lambalgen, Utrecht University	<a href="#">Dialogue as Pedagogy: Designing Conversation-Based Assessment for Interdisciplinary Learning</a> – Jillian Terry and Chris Blunt, London School of Economics and Political Science	<a href="#">Teaching Leadership as Interdisciplinarians: Creating Space for Creativity and Complexity in Higher Education</a> – Amélie Mons, University of Manchester	<a href="#">UG Persona Grata? Transdisciplinary Education and Customized Large Language Models</a> – Gerda van Roozendaal, University of Amsterdam  <a href="#">Admitting Learners with Range: A Cambridge Perspective</a> – Philip Graham, Homerton College, University of Cambridge	
12:25	20 mins		Room Free for Networking	<a href="#">From Nonformal Learning to Interdisciplinary Practice: Designing Pathways into Higher Education</a> – Lorna Sibbett and Rob Tumilty, The Open University	<a href="#">Creative learning activities in interdisciplinary bachelor education</a> – Anastasia Hacopian, Utrecht University	<a href="#">Jack of All Trades, Master of Research</a> – Adam Mountford, University of Birmingham  <a href="#">Cultivating Citizen Scholars: developing interdisciplinary lifelong learning for adults</a> – Deirdre Macleod, Suzanne Hermiston and Jenny Scoles, University of Edinburgh	
12:45	45 mins	Lunch (Provided)					
13:30	20 mins		Room Free for Networking	<a href="#">Keele's Global Challenge Pathways - embedding an institution-wide interdisciplinary elective pathways programme</a> – Katie Szkornik, Keele University	<a href="#">From Learners to Partners: Students Coaching Teachers Across Disciplines</a> – Eleni Spiroudis, University of Zurich	<a href="#">Boundary Objects and Creative Play in Academic/Industry Third Spaces</a> – Mim Sorrentino, Susan Wilkins and Martin Grimer, University of Greenwich <b>ONLINE</b>	
13:50	20 mins		<a href="#">Breaking Down Walls: Collaborative Module Design Across Diverse Disciplines</a> – Marcus Hill, University of Leeds	<a href="#">Interdisciplinary learning journeys: start where we are</a> – Elaine Brown, Anglia Ruskin University	<a href="#">Don't Solve It, Re-Make It: Joint Problem Framing as Interdisciplinary Art</a> – Peter Hochenauer, University of Vienna	<a href="#">The other sort of outdoor education - its contribution to interdisciplinary learning</a> – Roger Scrutton, University of Edinburgh	

14:10	5 mins	Changeover break				
14:15	20 mins		<a href="#">Bridging Disciplines, Building Communities: An Interdisciplinary Model of Service-Learning</a> – Eva Van Moer, University of Antwerp	<a href="#">Low threshold interdisciplinary encounters - what and how?</a> – Mira Vogel, King’s College London	<a href="#">Why Multidisciplinary Curricula Don’t Make Interdisciplinary Thinkers</a> – Simon Scott, University of Birmingham	<a href="#">Designing for creativity in interdisciplinary learning</a> – Febe de Vos, Utrecht University  <a href="#">Curation Kills: How Interdisciplinary Practice Changes When It Becomes Visible?</a> – Anthony Skerik, University of Edinburgh
14:35	20 mins		<a href="#">Partnerships Across Boundaries: Making Employer-led Interdisciplinary Student Projects Work</a> – Joy Perkins, Heriot-Watt University and Stuart Durkin, University of Aberdeen	<a href="#">From Review to Opportunity: Expanding Interdisciplinary Curricula and Practice in Higher Education</a> – Emma Bolger and Lorna Sibbett, The Open University	<a href="#">Tricky Encounters: Creative Practice as the Solution to Interdisciplinary Speed Dating</a> – Mark Hamilton, Catherine Davidson, Oliver Sterland and Afroditi Maria Koulaxi, Regent’s University London	<a href="#">Purposeful inquiry: the interdisciplinary pathway for the IB extended essay</a> – Robin Julian, International Baccalaureate Organisation
14:55	20 mins		<a href="#">Coastal Conservation of the Hebrides: bridging disciplinary boundaries and enhancing student enquiry on environmental and cultural conservative through an interdisciplinary residential field course</a> – Hannah Mathers, University of Glasgow	<a href="#">Where Do Interdisciplinary Students Belong? An SEMH-Informed Framework for Bridging Secondary and Higher Education Transitions</a> – Chris Blunt and Kate Blunt, London School of Economics and Political Science	<a href="#">Experiences of creativity in interdisciplinary settings: a diffractive exploration</a> – David Jay, Anglia Ruskin University	<a href="#">The Cambridgeshire Witches in Iambic Pentameter: one secondary school’s interdisciplinary tales of success and development</a> – Joanna Stell, Impington Village College
15:15	15 mins	Afternoon break: Tea, coffee and snacks				
15:30	20 mins		<a href="#">Systems Thinking as vehicle for ID Collaboration</a> – Coyan Tromp, University of Amsterdam	<a href="#">From Silos to Streams: Enacting Fluency Across Disciplines</a> – Maria Charalambous, Regent’s University London	<a href="#">Creativity Without Boundaries: Rethinking Learning for a Changing World</a> – Courtney McLeod, Bauer Media UK	<a href="#">Many Disciplines, One Melody: Designing Inclusive Music Learning Through Interdisciplinary Collaboration</a> – Tiffany Roman, Kennesaw State University

					<a href="#">Interdisciplinary, International, Intergenerational: The power of cohort-building for collaboration in teaching and learning about ageing and care</a> – Emilie McSwiggan, University of Edinburgh	
15:50	20 mins		<a href="#">Create a Course Challenge</a> – Marleen van der Meer and Andrea Manneke, University of Amsterdam	<a href="#">Meta-learning maps as artefacts to catalyse and visualise interdisciplinary learning</a> – Ash Brockwell, London Interdisciplinary School	<a href="#">Guardians of Collaboration: Assembling Disciplines and Communities for Impact</a> – Ailsa Dollard, University of Lancashire	<a href="#">The final year project as a creative interdisciplinary space</a> – Abigail Bellamy-Carter, University of Birmingham
16:10	5 mins	Changeover break				
16:15	45 mins	<b>Closing Plenary</b>	<a href="#">Time, trust and creativity: A student-staff collaborative ethnography on an interdisciplinary undergraduate programme</a> – Sara Albakri, Jenny Scoles, Sora Choo and Polly Dipper, University of Edinburgh  Why Interdisciplinary Learning matters: Creative thinking for understanding a complex world – Colin Graham, University of Edinburgh			
17:00		<b>Wine Reception</b>				

## Opening Plenary

Welcome from the Edinburgh Futures Institute, University of Edinburgh

## Keynote Address

### Making Space to Daydream

#### Helena Good, Managing Director - Daydream Believers

Creating space for interdisciplinary learning within formal education is increasingly difficult as pressures around attainment, accountability, and future employability intensify. This paper presents an approach demonstrating how Project-Based Learning (PBL) can create spaces for Interdisciplinary Learning (IDL) by reframing it as a creative, making-focused curriculum entitlement.

The paper draws on the work of Daydream Believers and two interdisciplinary qualifications - SCQF Creative Thinking and SCQF Creative Innovation. Designed with Edinburgh Napier University, where the programmes are credit-rated, alongside industry partners, Education Scotland, and with support from the Scottish Government. University research and disciplinary thinking are translated into practical, project-based resources used by teachers with primary and secondary learners, enabling knowledge to move beyond higher education and into classroom practice.

Rather than positioning interdisciplinary studies as the integration of subjects alone, the qualifications are built around creative projects that require learners to make something new in response to real-world challenges. Disciplinary knowledge, creative methods, and AI tools are introduced as materials for thinking, supporting learners to generate ideas, explore perspectives, synthesise information, and iterate on their work. AI is framed as a thinking partner supporting questioning and reflection.

Drawing on teacher reflection, student voice, and project work, the paper shows how creative PBL spaces support transferable and lifelong skills such as collaboration, problem framing, adaptability, and communication. Learners report increased engagement and confidence.

The paper concludes by moving from the what and why of interdisciplinary learning to the how, demonstrating how Daydream Believers has opened up timetabled, assessed curriculum space for creativity-led interdisciplinary learning within schools across Scotland and beyond.

*Helena Good MBE is an education innovator, speaker, and founder of the award-winning organisation Daydream Believers. Her work focuses on reimagining education through creativity, interdisciplinary thinking, and learner agency, with a particular interest in how systems and structures can make space for independent thought and imagination. She works collaboratively with educators, universities, industry, and policymakers to develop new models of learning that challenge traditional curriculum boundaries and respond to real-world complexity. Helena was awarded an MBE for services to education and received an honorary doctorate from Edinburgh Napier University in 2025 in recognition of her contribution to education.*

## Abstracts – Short Papers

### Designing Sustainability at Scale: A Collaborative Model for Interdisciplinary Learning

Annabel Robson and Michelle Feng - University of Manchester

Theme: Collaboration, Target Audience: Those who are new to interdisciplinarity, Level: Undergraduate

This paper presents a successful interdisciplinary collaboration at the University of Manchester that supports education for sustainable development at scale.

In 2025, the University College for Interdisciplinary Learning (UCIL) partnered with the School of Biological Sciences (SBS) to ensure that all first-year SBS students (approximately 800 annually) engaged meaningfully with sustainability. The initiative responded to new QAA benchmark statements requiring disciplines to address wider societal challenges, including sustainability. The project aimed to create an accessible, high-impact 'bite-sized' version of UCIL's established interdisciplinary unit, 'Creating a Sustainable World' (CaSW), adapted to the disciplinary context of biological sciences.

Rather than positioning interdisciplinarity as something students encounter outside their discipline, the course introduces sustainability through an interdisciplinary framing and then supports students to deepen their understanding within their own disciplinary context. The course was developed through a team-based design approach involving SBS academics and students, UCIL interdisciplinary specialists, and Graduate Interns. Two workshops guided the process: the first identified core CaSW content to retain and opportunities for disciplinary alignment; the second focused on co-creating bespoke activities suitable for students across more than 15 SBS disciplines.

Over five months, the team developed a blended course underpinned by four principles: interdisciplinarity, interactivity, student-centred design, and pedagogical coherence. Delivered in September 2025, early indicators suggest strong engagement and improved student understanding of sustainability in biological sciences. UCIL is now developing a reusable framework to support other Schools in adapting core sustainability content to their multidisciplinary contexts, demonstrating how interdisciplinary expertise can enable curriculum change at scale.

*Annabel Robson is a Graduate Intern at the University College for Interdisciplinary Learning (UCIL) at the University of Manchester and a Biology graduate from its School of Biological Sciences (SBS). Drawing on her disciplinary background and experience as an SBS student, she contributed to a large-scale UCIL–SBS collaboration to adapt the interdisciplinary unit 'Creating a Sustainable World' into a bite-sized format to be taken by approximately 800 first-year SBS students annually. Annabel led workshops with SBS academics and UCIL specialists to select content, align sustainability concepts with diverse programmes, and design bespoke learning activities. She also supported the evaluation of student engagement and learning outcomes. Her interests include interdisciplinary approaches to sustainability education, student-informed curriculum design, and translating interdisciplinary frameworks into disciplinary teaching practice.*

*Michelle Feng is a Graduate Intern at the University College for Interdisciplinary Learning (UCIL) at the University of Manchester, where she completed a Master's degree in Geographical Information Science in the School of Environment, Education and Development. She contributed to a collaborative initiative between UCIL and the School of Biological Sciences (SBS) to adapt the interdisciplinary unit 'Creating a Sustainable*

*World' into a bite-sized, blended online course for all first-year SBS students. Drawing on her academic background in sustainability, Michelle led workshops with SBS academics and UCIL specialists to shape content, align interdisciplinary sustainability concepts with diverse programmes, and design bespoke interactive and reflective learning activities. Bringing a student-centred perspective, her role also supports the development of accessible and engaging digital learning materials.*

## **Enabling Interdisciplinary Learning within Discipline-Based Curricula**

**Emma Skippings, Esra Kurul, Laura Novo De Azevedo and Lucy Turner - Oxford Brookes University**

Theme: Pathways, Target Audience: Those who are new to interdisciplinarity, Level: Undergraduate

Many universities actively promote interdisciplinary learning while continuing to operate within discipline-based curricula. Building on this context, this paper presents the development and evaluation of an interdisciplinary learning toolkit designed to operate within existing curricular structures, and examines the pedagogic, spatial and organisational conditions required for its successful integration.

The toolkit was co-designed with students and implemented through a live interdisciplinary project on Healthy Cities involving 59 undergraduate students from Urban Design in the School of the Built Environment and Graphic Design in the School of Arts. While the toolkit workshops were facilitated by members of the project team, interdisciplinary learning was enabled through the design of flexible and resilient modules capable of adapting to live briefs and evolving project dynamics.

The toolkit comprised two workshops. The first focused on relational and team-based practices, including working styles, communication and conflict management. The second employed concept mapping as a transdisciplinary method to support shared problem framing and the integration of disciplinary perspectives. These activities were embedded within Urban Lab teaching spaces that could be reconfigured by students and staff, supporting collaboration, creativity and experimentation.

A mixed-methods evaluation, including surveys, reflective diaries, staff interviews and analysis of student outputs, indicates that within discipline-based curricula, interdisciplinary learning was enabled not only by the toolkit itself, but by the alignment of adaptable module design, pedagogic intent and learning environment. In this context, modules and spaces functioned as forms of placemaking that made interdisciplinary practice possible without restructuring programmes within contemporary higher education systems.

*Emma Skippings is Senior Lecturer in Planning in the School of the Built Environment at Oxford Brookes University, teaching across undergraduate and postgraduate programmes in planning, urban policy and development. She leads and teaches modules including Introduction to Urban Design and Planning, Urban Diversity: People, Society and Space, Sustainable Development and Legal and Regulatory Frameworks, and is Subject Coordinator for the MSc Infrastructure Planning and Sustainable Development. Emma supervises BA and MSc dissertations and has contributed to doctoral supervision internationally. Her research focuses on informal housing markets, peri-urban transformation, pro-poor infrastructure delivery, urban diversity and inequalities, and informal institutions in land delivery, particularly in the Global South. Prior to academia, she practised as a solicitor specialising in company, commercial, property and finance law in London and the Middle East.*

*Esra Kurul is Professor of Sustainability Transitions in the Built Environment and Research Lead in the School of the Built Environment at Oxford Brookes University. She leads the Smart Construction & Impact Assessment Group and was a co-lead of the University's Sustainable & Resilient Futures Network between 2021 and 2024. Her research is interdisciplinary and focuses on sustainability in the built environment, adaptation of businesses and construction practices to the climate crisis, and knowledge creation and innovation in complex projects. Her previous work has explored social capital, collaborative working, adaptive reuse of existing buildings and conservation of the built environment. Esra teaches across undergraduate and postgraduate programmes and has a strong interest in problem-based and blended learning. She supervises doctoral research in sustainability, construction management and the built environment.*

*Lucy Turner is Head of Portfolio Transformation at Oxford Brookes University, specialising in strategic planning and curriculum development to enhance academic provision within the Faculty of Health, Science and Technology. She also serves as Associate Dean and Enterprise and Employability Lead in the School of Arts, with a focus on quality assurance and programme development. Her previous roles include leadership positions in quality assurance and Course Leader for Foundation Art and Design, supporting high academic standards and student progression. Prior to higher education, Lucy worked as Art Director at Design Solutions UK Ltd and as a Graduate Designer at Dorothy Perkins. She holds an MA in Fashion Textiles, a BA (Hons) in Knitwear Design, and a Masterclass in Service Design from the Royal College of Art.*

*Laura Novo de Azevedo is an architect, urban designer and Associate Professor in Urban Design and Planning at Oxford Brookes University. Her teaching and research focus on interdisciplinary learning, bringing together urban design, planning, fine art and critical pedagogy to explore how students learn through creative, practice-based and relational methods. She is particularly interested in how drawing, making, writing and reflective practice can support deeper understanding of cities, public space and social issues. Laura leads and teaches across undergraduate and postgraduate programmes and is actively involved in curriculum development that integrates live projects, experiential learning and cross-disciplinary collaboration. Alongside her academic work, she maintains an active artistic practice and is currently completing an MFA in Fine Art, which informs her interdisciplinary approach to learning and teaching.*

### **Caatinga-ing the curriculum: roots of an anticolonial perspective**

**Igor dos Santos Mota, Laurice Fretwell and Dom Jackson-Cole - University of Derby**

Theme: Spaces for Creativity, Target Audience: Those who are new to interdisciplinarity, Level: Undergraduate

In this interdisciplinary presentation-performance, I will show you the roots of what I am calling the process of "Caatinga-ing" the curriculum. The idea comes from an anticolonial (Bispo dos Santos, 2023) perspective, especially framed on the plurality of cosmopoetics (Glissant, 1997; Porto, 2025) and epistemologies (Smith, 1999) embroidered by riverine communities from the Caatinga region, located in the Northeast of Brazil. Through a confluence of autoethnography (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018) and poetic fabulation (Girvan et al, 2024), I will nurture this soil with a collective "poetic sweat", also using creative expression as theory. Drawing from this, one of the reflections I aim to address is how these human and non-human body-territories (Miranda, 2023) can contribute to beyond-disciplinary praxis, especially in the curricula, towards social justice and education for democracy.

*Igor dos Santos Mota (he/him) is a PhD student at the University of Derby, developing research on Decolonising University Curriculum. He is the co-chair of the Decoloniality and Education Staff-Student Group (UoD), a member of the Pedagogic and Research Cluster (UoD), and a collaborator of the Study and Research Group on Languages, Internationalisation and Language Policies (Uefs). Igor holds a BA in English and*

*Portuguese Languages and Literatures (State University of Feira de Santana, Brazil) and is an Erasmus alumnus (University of Minho, Portugal). Besides, he is a teacher, award-winning poet, translator, and columnist for the Brazilian literary magazine Ruído Manifesto.*

## **Reimagining English for Specific Purposes as a Creative, Interdisciplinary Space in Agricultural and Forestry Education** **Dian Islami Prasetyaningrum - University of Limerick**

Theme: Spaces for Creativity, Target Audience: Those who have some experience, Level: Undergraduate

English for Specific Purposes (ESP) has the potential to be a creative, interdisciplinary tool in agricultural and forestry education. While ESP is frequently viewed as a supporting topic focused on technical English language skills, this study reimagines it as an active site of interdisciplinary knowledge integration and creative meaning-making. This study investigates how ESP classrooms mediate the engagement of students with disciplinary knowledge, sustainability challenges, and professional identities in agricultural and forestry contexts through the integration of interdisciplinary theories, sociocultural perspectives on language, and educational creativity. The data collection uses a qualitative case study employing two instruments: an online survey and classroom observations of first-year university students in agriculture and forestry. The study explores how teaching methods, including project-based and task-based learning, and the use of real disciplinary genres, foster interdisciplinary thinking and creativity. The results show that students who integrate scientific, ecological, and social perspectives can use language as an epistemic resource. Students employ collaborative engagement and genre-based challenges to creatively reframe real-world agricultural and forestry problems while negotiating their growing professional identities. The objective of this research is to highlight ESP as a creative, interdisciplinary field that enhances awareness of the role of language in STEM education, particularly in areas intensely concerned with sustainability. This reconceptualization impacts the development of sustainability-focused communication skills in agriculture and forestry education, interdisciplinary pedagogy, and ESP curriculum design.

*Dian Islami Prasetyaningrum is a PhD student at the School of Modern Languages and Applied Linguistics at the University of Limerick, Ireland. She is an Indonesian scholar and has served as an English for Specific Purposes (ESP) lecturer since 2017. A combination of her academic and professional experiences has underscored a strong interest in the interface between language education and disciplinary knowledge. Mainly informed by contexts of Agriculture and Forestry, Dian seeks to foster an interdisciplinary engagement between Language Studies and the Sciences. Her PhD research focuses on English Medium Instruction (EMI) in STEM disciplines, with a specific focus on Indonesian higher education contexts. The research aims to contribute to ongoing debates in international contexts on language policy, practice, and pedagogy in multilingual and developing higher education settings. Her research areas of interest are ESP, STEM education research, sustainable education, science communication, and interdisciplinary research in language education and acquisition.*

## **Crossing Boundaries in Interdisciplinary Design: people, place and pedagogy**

### **Tenia Kyriazi, Rafe Hallett, Olga Mourouti - Middlesex University Dubai**

Theme: Collaboration, Target Audience: Those who have some experience, Level: Undergraduate

Interdisciplinary education is increasingly seen as essential for preparing graduates to address complex challenges that transcend geographical, cultural and disciplinary boundaries (Lyll et al, 2015; Ashby et al, 2019). This presentation shares how Middlesex University is manifesting its strategic vision for globally-focused, interdisciplinary education by:

1. Creating curriculum structures that enable students to engage with interdisciplinary global education
2. Empowering staff to collaborate in the design, leadership and delivery of these interdisciplinary curricula.

The presentation draws on ideas of 'crossing boundaries' at interconnected levels: institutional, programme, and module:

1. At institutional level, we reflect on a university-wide curriculum enhancement project designed to embed interdisciplinarity at scale. Central to this initiative is the development of a curated catalogue of cross-faculty, cross-campus optional modules, organised into thematic clusters that provide students with interdisciplinary pathways aligned to our institution's education priorities. These clusters curate and refresh existing provision to create new opportunities for collaboration across faculties and campuses.
2. At programme level, we give a snapshot of our newly validated PGCertHE programme, which energises staff development via a community that connects academics and third-space professionals from across our global campuses. This sets up staff for ambitious, globally inflected portfolio diversification.
3. At more granular, module level, we share specific insights from the development and delivery of an interdisciplinary 'Student Consultancy' module which introduces students to live challenges set by employers.

This layered presentation highlights pedagogical and organisational considerations, including co-creation across disciplines, coordination across campuses, and the professional development required to support staff in interdisciplinary education, impact and leadership.

#### References:

- Lyll, C., Meagher, L., Bandola, J., and Kettle, A. 2015. "Interdisciplinary Provision in Higher Education." University of Edinburgh.
- Ashby, I., Exter, M. 2019. "Designing for Interdisciplinarity in Higher Education: Considerations for Instructional Designers." TechTrends 63, 202–208.

*Professor Tenia Kyriazi is a Professor in Legal Education, Deputy Director Teaching and Learning, Law & Social Sciences and Head of Law and Social Sciences at Middlesex University Dubai. She holds a PhD in International Human Rights Law from the University of Athens (Greece), an LLM in International Law with International Relations from the University of Kent at Canterbury (UK), a BA Law from the University of Athens (Greece) and a Post-Graduate Certificate in Higher Education from Middlesex University (UK). Tenia is a Principal Fellow of Advance HE and a Member of the Chartered Institute of Arbitrators. She is a founding member and the Secretary General of the UAE Branch of the ILA and a Fellow at the Centre for International Sustainable Development Law and currently serves as co-rapporteur of the ILA Committee on International Law for the SDGs.*

*Rafe Hallett is a Professor of Educational Innovation, and Director of Learning & Teaching at Middlesex University. He holds a National Teaching Fellowship (2016). Rafe acted as Dean of Education at Keele University between 2018-22, leading portfolios of digital education, student success, interdisciplinary education and curriculum development. He was the director of KIITE, the Keele Institute for Innovation & Teaching Excellence. From 2015-18, Rafe directed the Leeds Institute for Teaching Excellence, established to create a community of teaching innovation and pedagogy at the University. His academic background is Early Modern History and Epistemology. At Leeds, he worked as Associate Professor of History and led the Liberal Arts curriculum.*

*Olga Mourouti is an academic leader with a strong interest in practice-based education and experiential learning. She is currently Deputy Dean (Education) in the Faculty of Business and Law at Middlesex University and formerly served as Director of Teaching and Learning in the same faculty. Her work focuses on designing learning environments that embed real-world and global experiences within academic curricula, enabling students to engage meaningfully with professional, cultural and international contexts. She has a strong interest in interdisciplinary education, developing curricula that integrate knowledge and perspectives across disciplines to address real-world challenges.*

## **Statistics as a Bridge, Not a Barrier: Designing Interdisciplinary Pathways in a Data Science Classroom** **Mengxing Joshi - University of St. Andrews**

Theme: Pathways, Target Audience: Those who are new to interdisciplinarity, Level: Undergraduate

Interdisciplinary learning in methods-based modules often encounters two persistent challenges: students' uneven disciplinary backgrounds and widespread anxiety around quantitative methods. This paper presents a reflective account of designing and coordinating a fourth-year undergraduate methodology module, Data Science in Society and Space, which deliberately positions statistics and the R programming language as enabling tools for interdisciplinary inquiry rather than as disciplinary endpoints. The module brings together students from geography, sustainable development, and economics, creating an interdisciplinary classroom. Interdisciplinarity is intentionally cultivated through three interconnected pedagogical design choices. First, statistics and data science are framed as practical instruments for addressing real-world social, spatial, and environmental questions using national-level secondary survey datasets. Second, structured peer-learning activities encourage students to engage with research questions rooted in other disciplines, making disciplinary differences visible and productive rather than a barrier to learning. Third, a scaffolded learning design, supported by iterative formative assessment, guides students through the interdisciplinary research process itself. Rather than focusing solely on technical competence, scaffolding supports students to translate discipline-specific concerns into researchable questions, select appropriate analytical approaches, and critically interpret findings. In this way, scaffolding functions as a mechanism for sustaining interdisciplinary learning over time. The module is further enriched through cross-disciplinary and cross-sector guest lectures involving academic researchers and practitioners. Student feedback highlights increased confidence, reduced quantitative anxiety, and a stronger sense of agency in using data to address issues they care about. Students also report developing transferable skills including interdisciplinary communication, critical data literacy, problem-solving, and independent research design.

*Mengxing Joshi is an Associate Lecturer in the School of Geography and Sustainable Development at the University of St Andrews. Her role is education-focused, and she has actively developed her teaching profile through completing a Postgraduate Certificate in Academic Practice, gaining Associate Fellowship of the Higher Education Academy, and contributing extensively to teaching during her PhD studies. Her research is*

*inherently interdisciplinary, spanning sociology, development studies, geography, demography, human geography, and gerontology. She has a strong interest in research methods and has used mixed-methods approaches throughout her doctoral research. Dr Joshi is particularly passionate about teaching research methods and quantitative skills, and about supporting students to apply different methodological tools to investigate real-world questions they care about. Her teaching aims to build students' confidence, agency, and capacity for interdisciplinary inquiry.*

## **Supporting interdisciplinarity in PhD programmes: What happens after the grant is awarded?** **Katrine Ellemose Lindvig and Pelle Boers - University of Copenhagen**

Theme: Collaboration, Target Audience: Those who have some experience, Level: Postgraduate

Universities increasingly advance interdisciplinarity through strong rhetorical commitments in funding applications, strategic plans, and PhD programme descriptions, positioning it as a key response to complex societal challenges. Yet this prominence often sits uneasily with the everyday realities of institutional governance and support: while universities routinely acknowledge that new initiatives require sustained staffing, coordination, and educational infrastructure, they frequently fail to translate this recognition into concrete support for interdisciplinary PhD research and training.

Based on an ongoing qualitative study of PhD fellows' doctoral training practices within a European co-funded and cross-institutional PhD programme, initiated in September 2025, this presentation explores how interdisciplinarity is operationalised in everyday PhD work and supervision, and where institutional arrangements begin to generate friction. Although the study is still at an early stage, we can already see signs that these frictions materialise in seemingly mundane supervisory practices.

For example, while some supervisors have successfully secured funding for an interdisciplinary PhD fellowship, they appear to operate within supervisory arrangements that do not incentivise sustained co-supervision, regular meetings with co-supervisors, or active engagement across institutional boundaries. Such patterns shape the conditions under which PhD fellows attempt to integrate disciplinary perspectives and navigate competing expectations.

At the same time, observations point to openings. Targeted support and training for supervisors, reflection on assumptions embedded in PhD recruitment and selection processes, and the development of collaborative infrastructures, including CoNavigator sessions and interdisciplinary training schools, may strengthen the design and delivery of interdisciplinary PhD programmes and support collaboration across disciplines and institutional settings.

*Katrine Ellemose Lindvig is Associate Professor of Higher Education Research at the University of Copenhagen. Her research examines interdisciplinarity in higher education, focusing on how students and faculty navigate visible and implicit institutional structures. She studies how collaborative infrastructures for interdisciplinary work are built and sustained within traditionally monodisciplinary settings and explores gaps between intended and realised interdisciplinarity in teaching.*

*Pelle Boers is a PhD student at the University of Copenhagen with a background in History and Philosophy of Science. His PhD project is part of the EU co-funded INTERACT programme and focuses on how interdisciplinary research is conducted in practice. Using qualitative methods, he*

*studies the everyday research processes, coordination, and sustainability of interdisciplinary doctoral consortia, particularly in STEM-related health research.*

## **Teaching Data Science to Diverse Learners as an Interdisciplinary Practice**

**Serveh Sharifi and Stuart King - University of Edinburgh**

Theme: Pathways, Target Audience: Those who are new to interdisciplinarity, Level: Postgraduate

Data science is described as an inherently interdisciplinary field, bringing together statistics, computing, and domain expertise. In teaching data science to diverse learners, the focus is usually on concepts, tools, and applications rather than the underlying mathematics. This presentation draws on the experience of teaching data science to students from varied disciplinary backgrounds without advanced mathematical prerequisites. In this context, the talk explores data science teaching as a process of translation, compromise, and negotiation, and considers the role of shared tools, assessment, and uncertainty in shaping interdisciplinary learning. The presentation aims to open discussion about how interdisciplinarity in data science is defined, enabled, and limited in practice.

*Serveh Sharifi is a Lecturer in Mathematical Data Science at the School of Mathematics and Edinburgh Futures Institute, and a Fellow of the Higher Education Academy. Her research interests include identifiability problem in statistical models, multiple systems estimation, and applications of statistics in social sciences and psychology. She teaches undergraduate and postgraduate courses in statistics and is also interested in research in data science pedagogy.*

*Stuart King is a Reader in applied mathematics, his research interests span across applied machine learning and mathematical modelling, with applications from health image data through to geospatial problems. Topics of interest focus around data science applied to eye imaging, and environment, ecology and sustainability related data (animal abundance, tree health and deforestation, soil health). Stuart has been a past director of teaching within the School of Mathematics and is currently the teaching and learning AI lead for the College of Science and Engineering. His teaching has been in introductory programming and data science, often with an interdisciplinary angle and currently is to postgraduate students within the Edinburgh Futures Institute.*

## **Beyond Pedagogy: Navigating Organisational and Strategic Challenges of Interdisciplinary Education**

**Antonios Kaniadakis - Brunel University of London**

Theme: Spaces for Creativity, Target Audience: Those who consider themselves experienced in interdisciplinary learning and teaching, Level: Undergraduate

Interdisciplinary education is widely acknowledged for its pedagogical value in addressing complex societal challenges. Yet, in higher education institutions (HEIs), efforts to embed interdisciplinarity often falter, not due to lack of teaching innovation, but because of organisational, strategic, and leadership barriers. This paper examines two common pathways through which interdisciplinarity is introduced in university settings: stand-alone provision and curriculum-embedded models. Stand-alone interdisciplinary modules or programmes, often coordinated by central units, offer flexibility and experimentation with minimal disruption to existing structures. However, they face sustainability risks due to weak institutional anchoring and reliance on cross-departmental goodwill. In contrast, curriculum-embedded interdisciplinarity, delivered

through fully interdisciplinary degrees or structured major/minor pathways, offers stronger legitimacy and long-term value but raises challenges around quality assurance, accreditation, and brand coherence. Drawing on sectoral evidence and institutional case insights, this paper argues that the success of interdisciplinary education cannot be assessed solely on pedagogical grounds. Organisational design, leadership commitment, and strategic alignment are equally critical. Without clear institutional incentives, such as improving student recruitment, enhancing global reputation, or meeting national education metrics, interdisciplinary initiatives struggle to gain traction. To support HEIs in navigating these tensions, the paper proposes a practical framework for designing and sustaining interdisciplinary programmes that balance educational innovation with operational viability. By foregrounding the strategic and institutional dimensions of interdisciplinary education, we offer a roadmap for embedding it in ways that are not only pedagogically meaningful but also structurally resilient and strategically aligned.

*Antonios Kaniadakis is an Education-focused Reader in the Computer Science Department at Brunel University of London. He holds a PhD in Science and Technology Studies from Edinburgh and has practical experience in leading interdisciplinary degree programmes.*

## **Guardians of the Layered Learning Galaxy: A Spiral Model for Health Care Education**

**Ailsa Dollard, Stevie Seymour - University of Lancashire**

Theme: Collaboration, Target Audience: Those who have some experience, Level: Undergraduate

Interprofessional education (IPE) is often mandated by health and social care regulatory bodies as a critical strategy in preparing students for professional practice. The World Health Organisation identifies IPE as a global priority for addressing healthcare challenges. However delivering IPE across multiple disciplines and courses has its challenges. (Howard and McCoyd, 2023; Patel, Begum and Kayyali, 2016).

At the University of Lancashire, our cross-institutional leadership team of 22 academics ( Gillaspy et al 2025) has successfully embedded IPE across more than 20 health and social care courses.. Our leadership and facilitation team have co-designed and delivered over 70 IPE sessions across three geographically dispersed campuses reaching more than 3,000 students over the academic year. Bringing learners from different professional backgrounds together to address complex clinical problems, IPE emphasizes collaboration, communication and mutual recognition (Al-Hassan 2026) The program is structured to support students' progression from learning alongside each other, to learning about each other's roles and professions, and finally learning from each other through shared decision-making to improve patient and community care.

Our pedagogical approach draws upon experiential and heutagogical self-determined learning (Hase and Kenyon, 2000) which has been shown to develop key sector competencies such as self-efficacy, problem solving and collaborative working (Gillaspy and Vasilica, 2021). This presentation will illustrate how we have used heutagogy principles to design effective IPE learning experiences. Topics such as frailty, safeguarding, and neurodivergence are explored through innovative methods including large-scale online simulations and escape rooms. Quantitative data show statistically significant improvements in students' perceived teamwork competencies and confidence, while qualitative feedback highlights enhanced understanding of professional roles and readiness for practice. Our model demonstrates how IPE can be sustainably embedded across curricula through strategic leadership, shared resources, and pedagogical innovation.

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*Ailsa Dollard is a lecturer in Adult Nursing and Lead for Inter Professional Education in the School of Nursing and Midwifery at the University of Lancashire. Ailsa is a qualified Health Visitor and prior to joining the university worked in the North West of England specialising in Safeguarding. She has gained her Fellowship of the Hea and has helped to develop innovative IPE sessions and expanded her research portfolio in the areas of impact of teaching on development of IPE competencies, serious games for IPE skills, and IPE faculty training.*

*Steven Seymour is a Lecturer in Interprofessional Education and Patient and Public Engagement in the School of Pharmacy and Biomedical Sciences at the University of Lancashire. He designs and delivers cross-disciplinary learning experiences for students in pharmacy, biomedical sciences, nursing, medicine, and allied health. His work fosters collaboration, communication, and person-centred care through real-world scenarios co-produced with service users and carers. Steven also leads initiatives with Comensus to embed lived experience into education, ensuring healthcare training remains grounded in community needs. He is passionate about co-production, empathy, and teamwork, supporting the development of reflective and compassionate healthcare professionals.*

## **Thinking as Craft in the Age of Generative AI: A Process-Oriented Approach to Epistemic Fluency in Liberal Arts Education** **Coco Kanters - Utrecht University**

Theme: Pathways, Target Audience: Those who have some experience, Level: Undergraduate

The rapid uptake of generative AI (GenAI) in higher education confronts Liberal Arts programmes with a fundamental challenge: how to preserve and cultivate students' capacity for critical judgment, responsibility, and meaning-making when knowledge production is increasingly automated? This paper presents the emerging GenAI vision of the Liberal Arts and Sciences (LAS) programme at Utrecht University and its implementation through the redevelopment of the programme's four interdisciplinary core courses.

The vision is grounded in what we call Thinking as Craft, an educational stance that treats thinking as an embodied, situated, and iterative practice rather than a purely cognitive activity or an optimisable output. Crafting foregrounds attention to process: students work slowly and reflectively, make deliberate choices, and reflect on the consequences of those choices. This orientation is critical as GenAI risks short-circuiting the formative learning processes through which students develop epistemic agency and responsibility. A crafting approach therefore shifts the educational focus from outputs to how knowledge is shaped, negotiated, and justified.

The LAS GenAI vision is theoretically informed by the concept of epistemic fluency, understood as the capacity to navigate different kinds of knowledge, ways of knowing, and distributed epistemic environments in interdisciplinary practice. Building on research into hybrid and distributed cognition, we conceptualise GenAI as part of the epistemic environment itself, requiring curricular designs that foreground process, reflexivity, and informed judgment. We illustrate how this vision is being translated into curriculum and assessment design and reflect on the kinds of interdisciplinary graduates this approach aims to develop toward 2030.

*Coco Kanters is an Assistant Professor at the interdisciplinary School of Liberal Arts at Utrecht University. Her research profile is that of a disciplined interdisciplinarian, bringing expertise in Cultural Anthropology to interdisciplinary research and education. She holds a PhD in Cultural Anthropology from Leiden University (2021, cum laude). Her research interests centre on the relationships between economics, politics, and expertise. Her doctoral research and earlier work at University College London examined alternatives to contemporary monetary systems and the institutionalisation of local currencies in Europe. She is currently interested in the institutional conditions that enable interdisciplinary knowledge production. Coco teaches across interdisciplinary undergraduate and honours programmes and coordinates the Liberal Arts and Sciences programme within the School of Liberal Arts. Her recent work engages with curriculum innovation in response to generative AI and professional skills development.*

## **Interdisciplinarity as Student Agency in Course Development and Direction** **Christopher Shoop-Worrall - University of Manchester**

Theme: Spaces for Creativity, Target Audience: Those who have some experience, Level: Undergraduate

This paper details and reflects upon the implementation of student choice within the deliberately flexible design of a new undergraduate interdisciplinary module. The module - 'Digital Futures' - included students from across business, media, marketing, and communications backgrounds. Within the first week of classes, sessions got them to consider, research into, and debate the topic of the first assessment question: "the greatest threat to the future of the media industries is..."

From their week 1 suggestions, thematic analysis and group consensus then created the content themes for the subsequent weeks; student choice, framed by their different disciplinary and personal backgrounds, therefore created a curriculum relevant to them. Moreover, their choices then created activity types – mock newsrooms, crash-course research sessions, invited guest speakers – that allowed for diverse forms of output and input from the students. These weeks of main content sessions then fed directly, as planned, into assessment two: "how prepared are you for future of your preferred/dream industry?" This was a chance for students to reflect, and essentially audit, their own readiness for an industry relevant to them, the weaknesses/threats of which had defined their previous weeks of teaching.

Through this detailing of this undergraduate module, this presentation hopes to outline creativity and interdisciplinary learning as things defined, at their best, by maximising student choice and involvement within curriculum design and delivery, reflecting on the successes and challenges that this unit faced, as well as responses from the learners who took it.

*Chris Shoop-Worrall (SFHEA) is an academic teaching and learning professional, based at UCIL at the University of Manchester. He previously worked as a Senior Lecturer in Media and Communications at UCFB, and also has prior experience teaching across higher, further, and secondary education. His current professional practice, and research, explores how interdisciplinary learning can be maximised through*

*attention to student voice and agency, and bringing different perspectives into both physical and digital learning environments. He is also currently researching the ongoing impact of cost-of-living concerns on the university student experience.*

## **Collaboration to create an interdisciplinary track of large-scale shared education for disciplinary bachelor programs at a Humanities faculty**

**Rianne van Lambalgen - Utrecht University**

Theme: Collaboration, Target Audience: Those who have some experience, Level: Undergraduate

At the faculty of Humanities, Utrecht University we as Directors of Education of Bachelor education within the faculty were tasked with the assignment to develop and implement a track of large-scale (inexpensive) teaching that is mandatory for students of all disciplinary bachelor programs in the faculty, an assignment that was given to us in the context of major budget cuts within the Humanities. We translated this assignment to an interdisciplinary track of faculty-wide courses that teach students to explore and research societal questions using different perspectives from humanities disciplines. In this presentation we show how we as directors of education from four different departments (Media and Culture Studies; Philosophy and Religious studies; Language, Literature and Communication and History) collaborated in challenging circumstances of budget cuts and time pressure. We describe our journey to formulate a shared vision on interdisciplinarity from our different perspectives on humanities education. Through consulting different stakeholders such as experts on interdisciplinary education, policy makers and directors of research at our faculty we developed a model with different learning goals with the purpose to teach students what their discipline means in the context of other disciplines and how it connects to societal problems. In this talk we discuss this process and the outcome of the model. Finally we will highlight our challenges with communicating the vision on interdisciplinarity and our considerations for implementing the model of the interdisciplinary track into courses within the humanities faculty.

*Rianne van Lambalgen is an Associate Professor and Director of Education at the School of Liberal Arts, Humanities at Utrecht University. The School of Liberal Arts consists of four broad, interdisciplinary bachelor programs (PPE, Artificial Intelligence, Liberal Arts and Sciences and Language and Culture Studies). Rianne has experience with teaching interdisciplinarity to students, but also teachers of interdisciplinary education. In her research she combines her disciplinary background on artificial intelligence, cognitive sciences and higher education looking at how and what tools can support interdisciplinary teaching and learning.*

## **Dialogue as Pedagogy: Designing Conversation-Based Assessment for Interdisciplinary Learning**

**Jillian Terry and Chris Blunt - London School of Economics and Political Science**

Theme: Pathways, Target Audience: Those who have some experience, Level: Undergraduate

This paper examines the design and delivery of an interdisciplinary commentary assessment model implemented in a large-scale, compulsory interdisciplinary course for 2,000 first-year undergraduate social science students. The assessment requires students to engage in a structured conversation with a peer from another discipline, using conversation insights to produce individually-written commentaries on interdisciplinary challenges spanning the areas of climate, AI, and inequality.

We argue that embedding conversation into assessment design offers distinctive pedagogical benefits for interdisciplinary learning. Through dialogue, students engage deeply with alternative viewpoints, refine and challenge their preconceptions, and develop crucial perspective-taking skills. Conversing across disciplinary difference creates opportunities to engage meaningfully with peers who differ in background, outlook, and analytical approach, fostering the intellectual humility and openness essential for interdisciplinary work while building a sense of community.

In addition to the pedagogical benefits for interdisciplinarity, the interdisciplinary commentary assessment model proves comparatively resistant to problematic Generative AI use. The conversation component makes it difficult for students to outsource commentary-writing to AI, and a recording of the conversation acts as an observable element. Rather than dismissing the incorporation of generative AI in this assessment entirely, students had the option to conduct their conversation with Claude for Education (Anthropic's large language model) rather than another student, offering insights into the potential for LLMs to develop students' interdisciplinary capacities.

This case demonstrates how dialogue-based assessment can advance interdisciplinary learning objectives while addressing contemporary challenges around AI in education, pointing toward assessment designs that channel technology use toward pedagogically valuable ends.

*Jillian Terry SFHEA is Associate Professor (Education) and Co-Director of LSE100, the sector-leading flagship interdisciplinary course taken by all undergraduate students at the London School of Economics and Political Science. Trained as a scholar of feminist International Relations, Jillian's primary research agenda is now situated in scholarship of teaching and learning, with a particular focus on interdisciplinary education, inclusive pedagogies, and the role of AI in cross-disciplinary learning. She also regularly consults with universities across the UK and around the world on the creation of new interdisciplinary courses and programmes.*

*Chris Blunt is a philosopher of medicine, and Associate Professor (Education) and LSE100 Co-Director at the London School of Economics and Political Science. My research focuses on Evidence-Based Medicine, hierarchies of evidence, and other problems related to evidence and ethics in biomedical research. In particular, I have focused on hierarchies of evidence, an influential tool for ranking and evaluating the quality of evidence from clinical trials and other forms of medical research. My work is interdisciplinary and brings together perspectives from clinical practice with philosophy, policy, ethics and methodology. I am also interested in issues relating to genomic and "personalised" medicine, and questions of demarcation between science and pseudo-science, particularly with respect to complementary & alternative medicine.*

## **Teaching Leadership as Interdisciplinary: Creating Space for Creativity and Complexity in Higher Education**

### **Amélie Mons - University of Manchester**

Theme: Spaces for Creativity, Target Audience: Those who have some experience, Level: Undergraduate

This paper reflects on the redevelopment of Leadership in Action (LiA), an interdisciplinary online unit offered by the University College for Interdisciplinary Learning and open to undergraduates at the University of Manchester.

With around 500 students annually, LiA invites students to explore contemporary societal challenges through three guiding questions: How does change happen? Who makes it happen? And what does this mean for leadership practice? Students encounter perspectives from leaders working across public, private, and voluntary sectors, alongside UK and international academics. Rather than treating these perspectives as fixed models, the unit positions them as resources for comparison and interpretation across disciplinary contexts.

The current redevelopment updates content and case studies while more intentionally embedding creativity as a route into interdisciplinary learning. Although the unit is inherently interdisciplinary due to its diverse cohort, the redesign addresses a deeper pedagogical challenge: how can leadership education be made fully interdisciplinary, and how can this also support both critical and creative thinking?

The presentation outlines three emerging design strategies informed by student feedback. First, leadership is framed as a 'travelling concept', organised around themes such as divergent thinking, authenticity, and risk, enabling students to draw on their own disciplinary backgrounds. Second, contributors from different sectors are brought into dialogue to surface complementary and conflicting perspectives, foregrounding complexity rather than consensus. Third, reflective, real-world assessments and cross-disciplinary discussions make interdisciplinary collaboration visible and actionable.

Launching in September, the redesigned unit positions interdisciplinarity as a creative space for developing new meanings, connections, and leadership practices.

*Amélie is a teaching and learning professional at the University of Manchester, specialising in interdisciplinary education and the teaching of leadership. After moving to the UK to complete a PhD in Cultural Studies, she has taught languages and humanities in a range of institutional and professional contexts. She is currently the unit lead for Leadership in Action, guiding hundreds of undergraduates each year through interdisciplinary approaches to leadership theory and practice. Her research background is in arts-based pedagogy, drawing on Philosophy, Education, and Theatre Studies to explore how learning across disciplines can reshape understanding and practice. A Senior Fellow of the Higher Education Academy, she is particularly interested in how interdisciplinary teaching can foster creativity, critical thinking, and meaningful learning at scale.*

## **From Nonformal Learning to Interdisciplinary Practice: Designing Pathways into Higher Education** **Lorna Sibbett and Rob Tumilty - The Open University**

Theme: Pathways, Target Audience: Those who have some experience, Level: Undergraduate

This presentation explores how an introductory undergraduate Open University module (YXM130), provides a bridge between nonformal learning and higher education practices, developing students' interdisciplinary capability through structured induction, guided choice, and reflection.

The module begins by supporting students to articulate their motivations for learning and to recognise how personal interests can be developed into coherent academic pathways. Students are guided to design and complete 150 hours of self-selected learning, drawing on open educational resources and spanning at least two disciplinary domains. This curated learning is planned, evidenced, and reflected upon, enabling students to practise interdisciplinary thinking while developing core higher education skills such as academic planning, evaluation of learning, reflective synthesis and communication.

Students map their learning to relevant UN Sustainable Development Goals, further situating their interdisciplinary work within current global challenges. To ensure students can critically evaluate diverse knowledge sources, students are introduced to a structured evaluative framework which they apply. Interdisciplinary practice is made explicit through a simulated research case study centred on Parkrun. Using this shared real-world context, students explore how disciplines contribute distinct perspectives and methods to address complex questions.

YXM130 thus operates as a structured pathway into interdisciplinary participation, offering students a secure space to develop academic agency, integrative thinking, and learner identity. This presentation will consider how such pathways support inclusive transitions, widen participation in interdisciplinary learning, and prepare students for more advanced interdisciplinary study.

*Lorna Sibbett is Chair of the Open Programme Board of Studies at The Open University, where she leads the governance and development of the Open Degree, through which students can design bespoke multidisciplinary pathways. Her work centres on widening participation and strengthening interdisciplinary capability, with a particular focus on credit-transfer students and flexible routes into higher education. Previously Co-Director of the Centre for Higher Education Research and Co-Director of External Relations in the School of Biology at the University of St Andrews, she has long championed integrative learning. A recipient of the Royal Society of Edinburgh Inspiration Award, Lorna has led the development of interdisciplinary teaching modules, inclusive admissions and induction practices, and the embedding of employability across degree programmes. Her current scholarship examines how belonging, identity, and academic agency are cultivated through student–staff partnership, informing the design of learning experiences that help students navigate and connect disciplinary domains.*

*Rob Tumilty brings more than 30 years' experience of leading interdisciplinary educational projects, and teaching within Further and Higher Education Institutions. Rob is currently Module Team Chair for the refreshed version of YXM130 Making your learning count, through production, and has tutored on the module since 2019. As Senior Lecturer in Business and Management, and Senior Fellow of the Higher Education Academy, Rob has held various leadership roles. He currently has a leading role within the OU Business School's MBA and MIM qualifications. Holding an MBA in Leadership Practice, and an MA in Reflective Practice and Applied Theology, Rob's scholarship interests have included 'Online distance learners, tutors, and academics as co-creators of theory and change in practice' and 'Understanding the impact of Associate Lecturers, who hold another OU contract, on student success and retention.'*

## **Creative learning activities in interdisciplinary bachelor education**

### **Jessica Oudenampsen and Anastasia Hacopian - Utrecht University**

Theme: Spaces for Creativity, Target Audience: Those who have some experience, Level: Undergraduate

In two courses of the interdisciplinary bachelor program at Liberal Arts and Sciences, creativity and creative thought are embedded in curricular activities that teach students interdisciplinary skills at different stages in curriculum. In this presentation, coordinators of both courses will present the learning activities and demonstrate how these stimulate students in their development as interdisciplinary researchers.

In the first-year course, The Writing Academy, students write an essay based on three (academic) texts. The texts are read using creative and prospective reading techniques (The New Humanities Reader, 2014). Using smart notes and concept matrices, students search for connections between the texts, which they then process into an essay using creative writing, focusing on the connections they have found. In this way, students learn a first, crucial step in the interdisciplinary learning process: creative and connective thinking and writing.

In the third-year course, The Interdisciplinary Capstone, students write an interdisciplinary capstone thesis in teams. Drawing on the interdisciplinary research method by Repko & Szostak (2026), student teams use a creative medium to explain their choice of an integration technique to create common ground from conflicting disciplinary perspectives. Students present the creative medium to their advisors and fellow students, using videos, metaphors, short stories, theater skits, collages, and simulations of game shows and scientific demonstrations.

The coordinators of both courses will explain how these two interventions apply creativity in different ways to help students develop connective thinking and integration skills at the beginning and end of the interdisciplinary curriculum.

*Anastasia Hacopian is an assistant professor in the Liberal Arts and Sciences bachelor program at the School of Liberal Arts at Utrecht University. She is coordinator and advisor of the Interdisciplinary Capstone. As an immigrant to the Netherlands and the child of immigrants to the United States, Anastasia is stimulated by the access her "otherness" grants to multiple cultures and vantage points. Her current research in higher education focuses on the dynamics between positionality and interdisciplinarity through the use of the positionality statement as a learning activity in interdisciplinary bachelor education. She applies creative research methodology in the classroom as well as the city, where she studies architectural humanities through connections between architecture, literature, film, and visual arts.*

*Jessica Oudenampsen is an assistant professor in the Liberal Arts and Sciences bachelor program at Utrecht University. She is coordinator of the course 'The writing academy'. She is also involved in the Master Medical Humanities, in which the discipline in which she is educated herself (Medicine) meets the discipline(s) in which she is currently working (Humanities). Jessica conducts research in the field of interdisciplinarity as an interdisciplinary researcher herself, focusing on interdisciplinary education in particular. Her interests are in the learning outcomes and competences that students can achieve in interdisciplinary education, as well as in how to design interdisciplinary education and how to design 'teach the teacher' programs for interdisciplinary education. In doing so, she develops concrete tools and teacher professionalization activities to translate the research findings into practice.*

## **From Learners to Partners: Students Coaching Teachers Across Disciplines**

**Eleni Spiroudis - University of Zurich**

Theme: Collaboration, Target Audience: Those who have some experience, Level: Postgraduate

This proposal showcases how a students-as-partners approach can enable new forms of interdisciplinary collaboration in higher education, drawing on two student coaching programmes at the University of Zurich (UZH).

The contribution focuses on Accessibility Coaches and AI Coaches – two roles in which students are trained to coach teaching staff.

Accessibility Coaches support teachers in creating inclusive, barrier-free learning environments and teaching materials, while AI Coaches assist with the pedagogically meaningful and ethically reflective integration of artificial intelligence into teaching. Both programmes are innovative in the sense that they reverse traditional academic roles: students act as coaches and advisers, while faculty assume the role of learners.

This role reversal raises key questions at the heart of students-as-partners: Will teaching staff accept being coached by students? Under what conditions are students recognised as legitimate partners and experts? In these programmes, students are not disciplinary experts in the traditional sense; instead, they develop transversal competencies that can be applied across disciplinary contexts.

The contribution further explores the interdisciplinary dimension of student coaching. Coaches are trained to work across faculties and disciplinary boundaries, theoretically enabling new forms of cross-disciplinary collaboration. However, this also prompts open questions: Do instructors choose coaches from outside their own disciplines for their disciplinary courses? Does cross-faculty coaching actually occur in practice, and does it foster interdisciplinary dialogue?

By foregrounding these tensions, the proposal argues that students-as-partners initiatives not only create new collaborative pathways but also challenge traditional understandings about expertise, authority, and interdisciplinarity in university teaching.

*Eleni Spiroudis holds a Master's degree in German Linguistics and Literature from the University of Zurich. She has worked as a project assistant, team leader, and lecturer at several Swiss higher education institutions, with a focus on curriculum development and the integration of interdisciplinary and transversal skills into teaching. She is currently Deputy Managing Director of the School for Transdisciplinary Studies at the University of Zurich, where she supports faculty in developing new inter- and transdisciplinary courses open to students from all faculties. Her responsibilities include supporting faculty in course development, coordinating study-related processes, and further developing the School's programme portfolio.*

### **Keele's Global Challenge Pathways - embedding an institution-wide interdisciplinary elective pathways programme** **Katie Szkornik - Keele University**

Theme: Pathways, Target Audience: Those who have some experience, Level: Undergraduate

Keele's Global Challenge Pathways were established in 2022 to champion and promote interdisciplinary education across the undergraduate experience in response to global challenges, employer expectations, and student demand for real-world, purpose-driven learning. Through five thematic pathways (Global Health, Social Justice, Enterprise Entrepreneurship and Employment, Digital Society and Climate Change and Sustainability) staff and students collaborate across disciplinary boundaries to engage critically with some of the world's most urgent challenges, including health inequalities, power and conflict, climate change, generative AI, and global citizenship. Grounded in the UN Sustainable Development Goals, our thematic pathways equip students with a 'sustainability lens', fostering the ability to make informed, ethical decisions with global impact. Approximately 80% of Keele's undergraduate programmes now offer students the opportunity to join a Global Challenge Pathway, with approximately 650 students each year choosing to engage. Students take one 15-credit module of their chosen pathway at each level of undergraduate study (45-credits total) and receive formal recognition of their engagement in interdisciplinary study on their final degree certificate. Qualitative feedback from module evaluations and reflective assessments highlights how students have developed increased confidence in addressing global issues, improved critical thinking skills, and a stronger sense of themselves as agents of positive change. The initiative has also had a clear impact on staff and their teaching practices, creating spaces for the development of cross-institutional, interdisciplinary networks and conversations. This institution-wide model of interdisciplinary, sustainability-focused education is scalable, adaptable, and impactful, both within and beyond the institution.

*Katie Szkornik's career cuts across the traditional boundaries of education, scholarship and leadership, and her recent career trajectory has a strong focus on educational leadership and curriculum design and enhancement activities. She is a Principal Fellow of Advance HE and an appointed Chair of Advance HE's Athena SWAN assessment panels. Her current role is Dean of Academic Enhancement at Keele University, where she works across the institution to develop and implement educational policies, support colleagues in their curriculum design activities, and lead on work to promote interdisciplinary education. Katie has a strong background in interdisciplinary education, having led the design and development of Keele's BSc Natural Sciences degree programme and the implementation of Keele's Global Challenge Pathways project.*

## **Boundary Objects and Creative Play in Academic/Industry Third Spaces** **Mim Sorrentino, Susan Wilkins and Martin Grimer - University of Greenwich**

Theme: Collaboration, Target Audience: Those who have some experience, Level: Undergraduate

As a collaborative trio of module leaders, we have been able to pilot three different experimental transdisciplinary projects at the borders of Higher Education and the creative industries. This work evolved from a small-scale incubator brief into three industry-facing modules. We focus on creating non-hierarchical networks where everyone teaches and learns, dismantling power structures and challenging expertise (Cook-Sather, Bahti and Ntem, 2019; Hooks, 1994; Freire, 2017; Vygotsky, 1978). We do this by positioning ourselves as transdisciplinary bridges, and by utilising the brief as a Boundary Object (Star and Griesemer, 1989).

The teaching team invites multi-disciplinary industry specialists to guest-teach, and recent alumni to help assess. The team adds to, and challenges, the body of knowledge. During the learning process, team leads delve a bit deeper into the possibilities of network learning by having industry partners mentor students directly. This leads to negotiating a middle ground where industry collaborators co-write the project. Another member of the team creates a rhizomatic assemblage of industry specialists, current students, student mentors, and alumni. She acts as a Boundary Broker.

It is the friction between industry practices and student knowledge that triggers the expansive learning needed for new understandings (Bhabha, 2003; Engeström, 2014). We create Third Spaces where diverse participants form dynamic, challenging, and caring learning networks in which this experimentation can happen. We create Boundary Objects, ambiguous umbrella briefs plastic enough to satisfy the requirements of these intersecting worlds. By detailing how we manage these things, the talk provides guidance for implementing collaboration in other contexts.

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*Mim Sorrentino is a Senior Lecturer and is Programme leader for the Creative Advertising and Art Direction BA (Hons) programme and pathway lead for Creative Communications. She is a D&AD and ISTD awarded lecturer and Senior Fellow of the Higher Education Academy. She has recently worked as a consultant for advertising agency M&C Saatchi and is engaged in a number of research projects that actively bring the creative industries to teaching environments. In 2025 she achieved her doctorate in which she explored how participants encounter and give*

*attention to ambient advertising in everyday places. She brings over 20 years' experience as an art director in advertising and design at some of London's most awarded agencies and was a co-founder of a design agency in the 1990s.*

*Martin Grimer has over 30 years' experience as an awarded Creative Director in Branding and Advertising at some of London's best agencies and in 2011 co-founded his own agency. Over the years, he has built and developed several award-winning creative teams working across some of the most iconic and best loved local and global brands from Cadbury's to HBO. He has appeared on BBC 'High street Dreams' in 2010 as an industry expert and on Junior Apprentice as industry advisor to Sir Alan Sugar in 2011 and on Dragon's Den in 2017. He is a D&AD awarded lecturer and Fellow of the Higher Education Academy.*

*Susan Wilkins has over 20 years' experience working at award-winning agencies in London, and in house for several companies including the Body Shop and TK Maxx. She is an award-winning creative and has been on industry judging panels for creative work. Over the last several years she has worked on raising awareness and funding for local community projects and small businesses. She joined the world of academia over 12 years ago, helping student teams achieve D&AD success and is a D&AD awarded tutor. She leads a popular 3rd year module working with the creative industries. She became a fellow of the Higher Education Academy in 2020.*

## **Breaking Down Walls: Collaborative Module Design Across Diverse Disciplines**

### **Marcus Hill - University of Leeds**

Theme: Collaboration, Target Audience: Those who have some experience, Level: Postgraduate

The Post Graduate Certificate in Academic Practice (PGCAP) programme at the University of Leeds offers all members of staff working in student education teaching roles the opportunity to work collaboratively alongside teachers from different disciplines across the institution. The assessed 'Micro Module' design and delivery section of the programme results in widened appreciation of a range of ideas which enhance pedagogical understanding and application.

Bringing educators from divergent disciplinary traditions together offers rich opportunities for creativity, innovation, and pedagogic transformation—yet it also exposes the tensions and habits that shape academic cultures. This session explores the value and challenges of interdisciplinary collaboration within the PGCAP drawing on relevant literature to share the potential value of this approach and explore how cross-disciplinary encounters expand teachers' pedagogical repertoires and challenge assumptions about teaching and learning.

This session will include tutor/assessor impressions of the practical and relational experiences of PGCAP participants, whilst working outside disciplinary comfort zones. It focuses on communication styles, epistemological differences, and contrasting expectations of module and assessment design. This session will explore how the module is designed to support participants to surface and navigate these complexities and illustrate how interdisciplinary partnerships can lead to more inclusive, flexible, and imaginative teaching practices. This will include sharing some reflections from a tutor/assessor perspective about how this approach works, perceptions of its value, questions raised, tensions/challenges which emerge, how they may be addressed and "what next"?

*Marcus Hill has worked in learning and development roles within the HE sector for 22 years. At the University of Leeds he is a Learning and Development Adviser within the Organisational Development & Professional Learning department and an academic personal tutor and assessor on the Post Graduate Certificate in Academic Practice. He previously presented at the ILTC in 2016 - "The Introduction of an*

*Interprofessional Undergraduate Module" (with Joan MaClean and Melanie Robbins), ILTC 2017 - "Changing gears - Expediting Organisational Reorientation Towards a Successful Interdisciplinary Learning & Teaching Environment", and ILTC 2018 - "The role of influence in interdisciplinary learning and teaching collaborations" (with Dr Dave Morrison.) He is passionate about collaboration in learning & teaching and furthering innovative approaches to pedagogical sharing. His qualifications include: BEd (Hons), MSc Management., Education and Training, FHEA, CiPD Dip, ILM L5 Coach, PG Cert Counselling & Interpersonal skills. His skills set includes: facilitation skills and experiential learning approaches.*

**Interdisciplinary learning journeys: start where we are**  
**Elaine Brown and Isobel Gowers - Anglia Ruskin University**

Theme: Pathways, Target Audience: Those who are new to interdisciplinary learning and teaching, Level: Undergraduate

How do you support the interdisciplinary learning journeys of 'reticent' students?

Ruskin Modules (RM) are interdisciplinary modules in Higher Education that bring students together from different courses to collaborate on complex, contemporary challenges. These modules are compulsory for full time undergraduates in their second year of study. Each year, students from 125 courses across 8 faculties select their choice from a typical set of 26 RM.

Students tell us they engage with their RM, gain valuable skills, feel empowered to act, and experience profoundly personal transformative learning. However, not all students are as keen. Each year a proportion of students do not choose their RM and must be allocated to a RM. Such students appear disinterested in interdisciplinarity, are less likely to engage in classes and less likely to submit work for assessment. Reticent students also report being less likely to see the relevance of RMs to their course, study, or future life ambitions.

To better understand the perspectives of students, we undertook survey and interview research of students who had chosen or were about to choose their RM. Clustering student motivations revealed 7 RM student personas (synthetic representations of people used in design (Rogers et. al., 2011:360)). We introduced personas to RM Leaders for academic year 2025/6. This presentation will share initial findings comparing metrics from a RM playing with persona-based communication to other RM with similar cohorts of students.

Reference:

Rogers, Y., Sharp, H. and Preece, J. (2011) Interaction Design: beyond human-computer interaction. Chichester:John Wiley & Sons Ltd.

*Elaine Brown is the Institutional Lead for Ruskin Modules (RM) at Anglia Ruskin University (ARU). Elaine designed and led the implementation of RM at ARU including the support and development of trailblazing educators, the quality assurance of the modules and socialisation of interdisciplinary curriculum across institutional systems. With a BSc in Biochemistry and MSc in Computer Science, and pursuing a PhD in Education, Elaine believes in the power of listening to people (do stop me to chat!) She researches student and educator motivations and experiences, particularly pertaining to perceptions of RM. Elaine is a co-editor of 'Introducing Interdisciplinary Modules in Higher Education: Enhancing Sustainability and Student Employability' by Routledge.*

*Isobel Gowers is the Academic Lead: Active Inclusive learning. Her research interests include active learning, interdisciplinary learning, and digital pedagogies. She is a Senior Fellow of the Higher Education Academy and Fellow of the Staff and Educational Developers Association. Isobel has designed two Ruskin Modules, currently leads the popular 'Do we own animals?' that explores the tensions between*

*commodification and sentience. Isobel has supported RM Leaders with problem-based learning and engaging students - ask about The Paddy Scale! Isobel is author of the chapter 'A Ruskin Module from Idea to Implementation' in 'Introducing Interdisciplinary Modules in Higher Education: Enhancing Sustainability and Student Employability' by Routledge.*

### **Don't Solve It, Re-Make It: Joint Problem Framing as Interdisciplinary Art** **Peter Hochenauer - University of Vienna**

Theme: Spaces for Creativity, Target Audience: Those who consider themselves experienced, Level: Postgraduate

Interdisciplinary education is frequently reduced to a toolkit for solving pre-defined problems. This contribution challenges that utility-driven narrative, proposing that the heart of interdisciplinarity is a creative act: the art of problem reformulation.

Through a methodology of reflective practice, I examine a Master's level course I developed and taught at the University of Vienna for students of all academic backgrounds. To bridge diverse disciplines, the course grounds practice in enactive cognitive science, treating extra-rational factors (such as emotion, intuition, and imagination) as legitimate epistemic resources. In this transformative learning setting, students do not merely "tackle" wicked problems; they "co-become" with them.

The core of this practice is "joint problem framing". I guide teams to abandon the search for solutions to "impossible" problems in favor of creatively "making a better problem". This iterative process is fueled by continuous, anonymous feedback loops between peers and myself, acting as a communal mirror for students to synthesize vastly different perspectives. Supported by commitment-based assessment and GenAI as a "divergent thinking" tool, the focus shifts from perfection to meaningful, partial progress.

Ultimately, I argue that framing interdisciplinarity as a creative practice grants students the transformative agency to reinvent the questions they are asked to answer, preparing them to navigate complexity through creative thought.

*Peter Hochenauer is a PhD candidate at the University of Vienna, where he conducts research on transformative education and interdisciplinary pedagogy. He studied cognitive science, with a focus on artificial intelligence and interdisciplinarity, as well as philosophy. Prior to his doctoral studies, he coordinated the interdisciplinary master's program MEi:CogSci in Vienna. Drawing on more than ten years of professional experience in software development and IT consulting, he now develops and teaches courses that frame interdisciplinary practice as a creative act. His work explores how enactive cognitive science can provide students with the foundational stance needed to navigate wicked problems.*

### **The other sort of outdoor education - its contribution to interdisciplinary learning** **Roger Scrutton - University of Edinburgh**

Theme: Wildcard, Target Audience: Those who have some experience, Level: Primary/Secondary Education

It is suggested that outdoor learning is an interdisciplinary enterprise. The case for this is strong and commonly argued in terms of outdoor learning that employs established curriculum disciplines, such as maths, biology or history, in pursuit of environmental, field or infrastructure studies. The Foundation-Pillars-Intel (FPL) model\* of the interdisciplinary learning process is an appropriate metaphor for these studies. But outdoor learning is broader than this, with firm roots in outdoor education for personal development from the early 20th century onwards.

Outward Bound (OB) is considered to be the benchmark for outdoor adventure education, focusing on personal development and life skills, such as resilience and social effectiveness. Following a review of learning on OB courses 25 years ago a model for the learning process remarkably similar to the FPL model emerged: the Learner joining the course became the Foundation, the Components of the course the Pillars and the Learner leaving the course, the Lintel. The Components comprised physical environment, and social environments, course activities, the instructors and service, acting in an interdisciplinary way on the development of the Learner ('intertwining' sensu Bloom and Krathwohl) through affective and cognitive processes. This is a complex process - as interdisciplinary learning is - but more specifically, a soft-complexity process, which changes the Learner's view of their own strengths and weaknesses. Outdoor education is particularly effective at developing these soft skills that are essential to the delivery of interdisciplinary learning.

Reference:

Graham, C (2020) What is IDL? [https://idlnetwork.substack.com/p/what-is-idl?utm\\_source=publication-search](https://idlnetwork.substack.com/p/what-is-idl?utm_source=publication-search)

*Roger Scrutton has been an Honorary Research Fellow in Outdoor and Environmental Education since 2008, with a long history of teaching outdoors in education and sport. He publishes regularly on the evaluation of the effectiveness of residential outdoor education programmes for school pupils. Before that post, he was Reader in Geophysics at Edinburgh, and elected to Fellowship of the Royal Society of Edinburgh in 1999. Outside academic work, amongst other things, he runs a charity that supports children from less well-off families to allow them to attend school camp at Benmore Outdoor Centre in Argyll.*

## **Bridging Disciplines, Building Communities: An Interdisciplinary Model of Service-Learning**

**Eva Van Moer - University of Antwerp**

Theme: Collaboration, Target Audience: Those who have some experience, Level: Undergraduate

Complex and urgent societal challenges—such as climate change, pandemics, and migration—require scientific responses that emerge from interdisciplinary collaboration and partnerships beyond academia. Universities are increasingly aligning their policies with this need, recognizing that societal engagement extends beyond bridging the gap between higher education and society. It foremost involves actively including those communities most affected by the issues at stake. In this context, Service-Learning represents a powerful pedagogy, as it integrates academic knowledge with active community participation, critical reflection, and in-depth analysis.

Service-Learning offers substantial opportunities for structural collaboration across disciplines and with diverse stakeholders. By approaching complex societal issues from multiple knowledge domains, new forms of synergy and broadened perspectives emerge. This interdisciplinary approach mirrors the future of higher education, where societal challenges are increasingly interconnected.

This contribution presents a case study of the course Community Service Learning (CSL) at the University of Antwerp (Belgium). Open to students from all academic backgrounds, CSL addresses real community needs while fostering social responsibility and civic engagement. Through an interdisciplinary lens, students examine diverse and complex societal problems, generating shared insights and collaborative learning processes.

The presentation discusses: (1) how interdisciplinarity and Service-Learning reinforce one another; (2) the value this offers to different stakeholders; (3) the additional competencies developed by students; and (4) practical strategies for implementing an interdisciplinary Service-Learning trajectory within one's own teaching practice.

*Eva Van Moer, PhD in Educational Sciences, has been teaching Community Service Learning (CSL) at the University of Antwerp since 2019. Her work focuses on integrating meaningful community engagement with academic learning, ensuring that students not only contribute to societal needs but also gain deeper insights into their fields of study. Through structured service activities and guided reflection, she helps students develop critical civic, personal, and professional skills. As the central contact person for students, organizations, and lecturers interested in CSL, Eva facilitates partnerships that strengthen community connections and enrich the educational experience. She supports stakeholders in exploring how service learning can enhance teaching, research, and social impact. Since 2022, Eva has also coordinated the University of Antwerp's Science Shop, which connects students, supervisors, and community organizations in collaborative research projects. These initiatives provide evidence based answers to questions from non profit groups and promote socially relevant knowledge creation.*

### **Low threshold interdisciplinary encounters - what and how?**

**Mira Vogel and Charlotte Haberstroh - King's College London**

Theme: Pathways, Target Audience: Those who consider themselves experienced, Level: Undergraduate

Operational complexity around timetabling and space often stands in the way of interdisciplinary university education. In response, we have designed a pedagogical pattern - an activity plan abstracted to a level of detail amenable to different contexts (Vogel and Haberstroh, 2025). The elements of this pattern are as follows. It is low-threshold, a series of short episodes to be integrated into curriculum and teaching without major overhaul. These deploy visual boundary objects (Star, 2011) that are accessible and meaningful to all disciplines involved, such as graphical abstracts, frameworks or infographics. The interdisciplinarity is based in disciplinary groundwork to consolidate what Horn and colleagues (2022) call students' 'epistemic stability', asking 'What does my academic learning so far bring to this?'. The pattern then uses encounters to stimulate 'epistemic adaptability', prompting students to generate questions for peers in other disciplines and respond to theirs in turn. The final stage is guided reflection.

The pattern has attracted local interest, particularly around Education for Sustainability, and we believe it could meet the needs of educators who would proceed with interdisciplinarity if they had a path round the obstacles. We have trialled it with a focus group of students, observed it in action in one module, and by the time of the conference we will have further observation and interview data analysis to share. Our session will discuss how the pattern has been adapted in practice, and how students can learn through it.

#### References:

Horn, A., Urias, E., & Zweekhorst, M. B. M. (2022). Epistemic stability and epistemic adaptability: Interdisciplinary knowledge integration competencies for complex sustainability issues. *Sustainability Science*, 17(5), 1959–1976. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11625-022-01113-2>.  
Star, S.L. (2010). "This is Not a Boundary Object: Reflections on the Origin of a Concept. *Science, Technology and Human Value* 35 (5): 601–617. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0162243910377624>.

*Mira Vogel is Senior Lecturer in Education and the lead for Education for Sustainability (EfS) in King's Academy, the educational development team at King's College London. After leading a 2023 systematic review on Education for Sustainability for Advance HE, she became involved in integrating EfS into curricula across King's. Towards this, she creates circumstances for educators to come together in different ways to equip students with the knowledge, competencies, and willingness to take action on nexus sustainability problems. Relatedly, she is interested in different dimensions of inclusive educational practice, focusing on hidden curriculum, equitable group work, and discussing sensitive topics across difference. She also enables (particularly) colleagues on education career pathways to carry out educational scholarship and be recognised for it. Mira is an Academic Chair in Circle U, an alliance of European research-intensive universities, where she supports partnerships to develop new sustainability-focused modules.*

*Charlotte Haberstroh is the Programme and Curriculum Design Lead at King's Academy and the Faculty Liaison contact for King's Business School. In this role, she advises and develops academics and professional services on programme and module design. She joined King's in 2022, initially as a Learning Developer at King's Academy and then to support early careers academics with their professional development. Charlotte has an interest in the development of students' academic literacies, interdisciplinarity in education and research as well as the relation between university curricula and skills for the future. Charlotte is a comparative social policy scholar by training (PhD at the European University Institute Florence 2016) and a Senior Fellow of the Higher Education Academy.*

## **Why Multidisciplinary Curricula Don't Make Interdisciplinary Thinkers**

**Simon Scott - University of Birmingham**

Theme: Pathways, Target Audience: Those who consider themselves experienced, Level: Undergraduate

Interdisciplinary programmes often assume that exposing students to multiple disciplines, along with transferable skills like communication and teamwork, will encourage them to think and work in an interdisciplinary way. This approach reflects a common tendency to view multidisciplinary and interdisciplinarity as points on a continuum. Based on a long-term experience of designing and regularly revising a core interdisciplinary curriculum within an institution that is divided into separate disciplines, this paper argues that this assumption is incorrect: multidisciplinary and interdisciplinarity are different in kind, not degree, and pedagogies designed for the former are not equipped to support the latter.

Students educated across disciplines often encounter epistemic uncertainty rather than integration, as they are faced with competing frameworks and unclear criteria for what is adequate. Skills-based approaches can support coordination, but they do not address the central learning challenge of interdisciplinarity: how to relate and evaluate partial and sometimes incompatible explanations. I argue that interdisciplinary learning requires pedagogies that explicitly cultivate judgement over time, and that interdisciplinary identity emerges gradually through sustained engagement with this epistemic work, supported by pedagogy and later stabilised through culture and community.

*Simon Scott is an Associate Professor at the University of Birmingham and Programme Lead for both the BAsc Arts and Sciences and the Interdisciplinary Study MRes. He leads the University's Interdisciplinary and Transdisciplinary Education Group and co-organises an Integration Experts Group at the ITD Global Alliance. He also serves on the editorial board of Interdisciplinary Science Reviews.*

## **Partnerships Across Boundaries: Making Employer-led Interdisciplinary Student Projects Work** **Joy Perkins and Stuart Durkin - Heriot-Watt University and University of Aberdeen**

Theme: Collaboration, Target Audience: Those who have some experience, Level: Undergraduate

This presentation explores the pedagogical and practical partnership approaches underpinning the 30-credit module, 'Employer-led Interdisciplinary Project'. This module is offered to penultimate year undergraduate students in the School of Social Science at the University of Aberdeen. It attracts students from non-vocational degrees such as Politics and International Relations, Sociology, and Anthropology, as well as from other degree subjects beyond the School, including Economics, Philosophy and Modern Languages.

A central feature of the 12-week module is an experiential learning opportunity delivered through a virtual, interdisciplinary group project provided by a small and medium-sized enterprise (SME), start-up business, or third-sector charity. Typically, students work in a group of three to four when undertaking their project. These external projects are often sourced through Interface, which has played a pivotal role in providing a diverse range of real-world projects from organisations across different employment sectors. Interface is funded by the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) and has a central role in linking Scotland's 19 universities with businesses to drive innovation and support economic growth. This external partnership has enabled a rich portfolio of interdisciplinary group project opportunities for our students across Scotland.

For those seeking to enhance or initiate externally sourced interdisciplinary, virtual project-based learning within their own context, this presentation will highlight what worked, the challenges encountered, and the forms of support that made a difference to delivering this provision with external partners. The presentation is likely to be of particular interest to degree programme directors, educational developers, module leaders, and learning technologists.

*Stuart Durkin is a Senior Lecturer based in the School of Social Science at the University of Aberdeen. He teaches Politics and International Relations and has research interests in student experiences of group work and learning in groups, student perspectives on authentic and alternative assessments, and graduate employability enhancement. <https://www.linkedin.com/in/dr-stuart-a-durkin-sfhea-52683b242>*

*Joy Perkins is an Associate Professor (Curriculum Innovation and Work-Integrated Learning) at Heriot-Watt University, Edinburgh. She works in partnership with academics to advance employability across Heriot-Watt's global campuses and was previously based at the University of Aberdeen. Her research interests and recent publications focus on the role of employer engagement in curriculum development. <http://www.linkedin.com/in/joy-perkins-a786641b>*

## **From Review to Opportunity: Expanding Interdisciplinary Curricula and Practice in Higher Education** **Emma Bolger and Lorna Sibbett - The Open University**

Theme: Pathways, Target Audience: Those who consider themselves experienced, Level: Undergraduate

Interdisciplinarity is increasingly positioned as essential to addressing complex social, environmental, and economic challenges, yet there remains limited clarity about how interdisciplinary engagement is introduced, sustained, and developed across learners' educational journeys. This paper examines pathways for interdisciplinary activity through a critical review of interdisciplinary curricula and practice, drawing on an institutional case study of a large, open access university with a longstanding tradition of multidisciplinary provision.

Using secondary data, comparative analysis of UK interdisciplinary programmes, and institutional reflection, the paper explores the distinction between multidisciplinary, interdisciplinary learning, and interdisciplinary practice, arguing that these differences are often blurred in both curriculum design and external discourse. The analysis highlights that many explicitly interdisciplinary programmes are small-scale, elite, and primarily targeted at school-leavers, while opportunities for sustained interdisciplinary engagement within lifelong and flexible learning pathways remain underdeveloped.

The paper identifies multiple entry points for interdisciplinary activity across the learning lifecycle, including early undergraduate “orientation” modules, explicitly interdisciplinary projects embedded within disciplinary study, and later stage opportunities that draw on learners’ professional and experiential knowledge. It argues that interdisciplinarity is most effectively sustained when it is progressively scaffolded, rather than located within a single module or event, and when learners are supported to develop both interdisciplinary understanding and awareness of interdisciplinary practice.

The paper outlines strategies such as curriculum mapping, communities of practice, and modular design to help institutions identify and extend interdisciplinary opportunities, proposing design principles that support long-term, inclusive, and adaptable interdisciplinary pathways.

*Emma Bolger has over 20 years’ experience working higher education teaching, research and career development roles. Emma’s core subject area is career guidance/career development, a field defined by its interdisciplinarity, drawing on theoretical and practical knowledge in psychology, education, sociology, politics and economics. For the Open University, Emma has taught in the faculties of Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics; Arts and Humanities and currently is based within Wellbeing, Education and Language Studies. Emma currently teaches on the interdisciplinary modules YXM130 Making your learning count and YXM830 Advance your independent learning. Emma’s most recent publication is *The Career Professional’s Guide to Research* (Trotman, 2025). <https://linktr.ee/emmabolger>*

*Lorna Sibbett is Chair of the Open Programme Board of Studies at The Open University, where she leads the governance and development of the Open Degree, through which students can design bespoke multidisciplinary pathways. Her work centres on widening participation and strengthening interdisciplinary capability, with a particular focus on credit-transfer students and flexible routes into higher education. Previously Co-Director of the Centre for Higher Education Research and Co-Director of External Relations in the School of Biology at the University of St Andrews, she has long championed integrative learning. A recipient of the Royal Society of Edinburgh Inspiration Award, Lorna has led the development of interdisciplinary teaching modules, inclusive admissions and induction practices, and the embedding of employability across degree programmes. Her current scholarship examines how belonging, identity, and academic agency are cultivated through student–staff partnership, informing the design of learning experiences that help students navigate and connect disciplinary domains.*

### **Tricky Encounters: Creative Practice as the Solution to Interdisciplinary Speed Dating**

**Mark Hamilton, Catherine Davidson, Oliver Sterland and Afroditi Maria Koulaxi - Regent’s University London**

Theme: Spaces for Creativity, Target Audience: Those who have some experience, Level: Undergraduate

Interdisciplinary classrooms frequently generate discomfort, resistance and misaligned expectations among both learners and teachers. Such moments can be interpreted as pedagogical failure rather than as evidence of learning in progress. This paper reframes interdisciplinary friction as a pedagogically meaningful signal and it explores how creative practices helped an interdisciplinary “mega-module” to become a generative space for reflection and growth.

Disciplines are understood not simply as bodies of knowledge. They are also epistemological assumptions about evidence and meaning. When students are asked to speak across disciplines, encounters can feel awkward or as some student filmmakers in this year's cohort proposed, a kind of "speed dating from hell". This can be as true for lecturers, established in their disciplines, as it is for students exploring nascent identities.

In our first-year "gateway" module, trepidation about collaboration with 'interdisciplinary others' persists. Inspired by creative practice, a facilitative model of learning has evolved that manages encounters through planning for and facilitating periods of uncertainty. By emphasising process, creative agency, reflection and multiplicity of perspectives, the approach aims to navigate discomfort to enable empowering insights about the nature of learning.

The paper reveals design principles for interdisciplinary learning that come directly from creative practices: staged encounters to provoke reflection, tolerance of uncertainty, and a shift in emphasis from resolving difference to learning how to welcome difference. We propose that discomfort in interdisciplinary learning is not a systemic failure, but a designable feature that prepares students for collaborative professional practice in complex, real-world environments.

*Mark Hamilton leads the delivery and strategic development of the university's foundation year and firstyear interdisciplinary Perspectives modules. His work supports students in building academic fluency across disciplines while fostering reflective and collaborative learning in diverse cohorts. His academic background spans intercultural performance alongside further training in psychotherapy and pedagogy. His teaching and facilitation practice draw on a long creative career as a danceractor, directorchoreographer and producer, integrating European theatre practices with Māori and South Indian performance traditions to explore identity, movement and embodied knowledge. Across senior academic and educational development roles in the UK and New Zealand, Mark has cultivated expertise in immersive learning design, intercultural communication and creative pedagogies that help students and staff navigate complexity with confidence and curiosity.*

*Afroditi Koulaxi is a Lecturer in Interdisciplinary Learning at Regent's University London, where she joined in 2026. Prior to this role, she was a Fellow at the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE), teaching artificial intelligence from a social science perspective. Afroditi is a Fellow of the Higher Education Academy and has extensive experience teaching at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels at LSE, King's College and Goldsmiths. She holds an ESRC-funded PhD in Media and Communications from the LSE. Her research examines the formation of citizen identity through intercultural encounters in crisis-ridden environments. Her work cross-fertilises theories and methods from media and communications, sociology, and urban studies, advancing interdisciplinary approaches to understanding social change. Currently, her work investigates climate-driven displacement in the immediate aftermath of Storm Daniel. She is the author of *Citizenship in Crisis in Athens: Migration, Media and Identity* (Routledge, 2025).*

*Oliver Sterland is a Senior Lecturer and Educational Development Lead at Regent's University London, specialising in curriculum enhancement, digital learning, and academic development. He holds a Master's degree in Online and Distance Education and is a Senior Fellow of the Higher Education Academy (SFHEA). For the past three years, he has co-led Learning Perspectives, a large institution-wide interdisciplinary entry-level module introducing students to diverse approaches to learning and academic inquiry. Oliver has extensive experience designing and facilitating large, skills-focused "megamodules" in business communication, critical thinking, and information literacy and research skills. His teaching emphasises confidence-building, autonomy, and transferable capabilities. In his educational development role, he contributes to institution-wide initiatives on assessment, interdisciplinary practice, experience-based curriculum design, and the university's "embrace AI"*

strategy. He also leads the TSLHE, an Advance HE-accredited programme that brings together colleagues from diverse academic and professional areas in a cross-functional continuous-improvement community.

*Catherine Davidson is writer, facilitator and Lecturer in Creative Writing at Regents' University, with a special interest in writing across the curriculum and interdisciplinary approaches to creative practice. At Regent's she has co-designed and co-led Learning Perspectives, an interdisciplinary introduction to active learning in higher education required of all first-year students. Beyond this gateway module, she also co-leads an interdisciplinary "Creativity and Imagination" elective and a masterclass in Creative Writing open to all disciplines. An experienced facilitator, she has led workshops and coached writers in a variety of organisations and community groups, including the LSE, the Atlantic Fellows for Social and Economic Equality, Amnesty International, Myth & Voice, and West London Welcome for Refugees. Her novels and poems often explore intercultural encounters; she has won a variety of awards for her writing, including for The Priest Fainted, now part of the small canon of Mediterranean American literature.*

### **Purposeful inquiry: the interdisciplinary pathway for the IB extended essay**

#### **Robin Julian - International Baccalaureate Organisation**

Theme: Pathways, Target Audience: Those who have some experience, Level: Primary/Secondary Education

The increasingly complex world that students inhabit often generates questions and issues that are better investigated through more than just one disciplinary lens. The new iteration of the IB Diploma Programme's extended essay includes a designated interdisciplinary pathway that guides purposeful research and writing on topics of personal interest. The pathway inspires, supports and scaffolds students as they look to integrate concepts, methods, theories, knowledge from two Diploma Programme subjects, e.g., language and literature and psychology, visual arts and science, or economics and anthropology. Five well-considered assessment criteria guide students as they analyse, evaluate and reflect, integrating the two subject lenses they have chosen. Teacher-supervisors support, but do not direct a student as they navigate their first foray into the world of academic writing. Five broad frameworks provide students with potential interdisciplinary areas as kick-off points for their work, but in practical terms students' ideas may have many different origins. The five frameworks are: power, equality, justice; sustainability, development, change; culture, identity, expression; evidence, measurement, innovation; and movement. time, space. Ultimately, a team of examiners who are experienced in interdisciplinary assessment will mark the interdisciplinary essays that students produce, applying the same criteria that students have been referring to during their research and writing.

*Robin Julian is a Curriculum Manager in the Education Office of the International Baccalaureate Organisation (IB). A passion for cross-disciplinary learning has evolved throughout his career as an educator and curriculum designer, inspired by students' desire to dig deep into complex questions that arise in their learning and lived experience. Robin who has Masters degrees in Asian Studies and Applied Anthropology, taught in various secondary education systems prior to joining the International Baccalaureate in 2016.*

## **Coastal Conservation of the Hebrides: bridging disciplinary boundaries and enhancing student enquiry on environmental and cultural conservative through an interdisciplinary residential field course**

**Anna McGregor and Hannah Mathers - University of Glasgow**

Theme: Collaboration, Target Audience: Those who have some experience, Level: Undergraduate

Sustainable development requires a fine balance between the needs of people and domestic animals and the plants and animals naturally occurring within a landscape. Particularly in island community, natural resources are limited so trade-offs are essential, yet such multi-faceted challenges are difficult to teach through traditional discipline-focused university degrees. In addition, the first-hand perspectives of people living in those places are fundamental to generating positive, sustained solutions. We will present an innovative approach to supporting applied learning of these challenges, bridging ecological, geological, linguistic and archaeological contexts and delivered through an intensive field course held on the Isle of Lewis. A team across Schools of Geography & Earth Science, Life Science and Humanities incorporated topics on cultural heritage, language, landscape and animals, particularly focusing on declines and conservation, and then applied their learning through a residential field course that visited many community organisations on Lewis gain first-hand perspectives on these topics. Visiting community organisations with different conservation focuses, including An Taigh Cèilidh (Gaelic language & culture), Callanais Standing Stones (Archaeology), Breedon Quarry (Geology) and the Species on the Edge wildlife festival (Zoology), then shaped learning about community perspectives on these concepts. Overall, this approach demonstrated the importance of interdisciplinary learning & teaching, particularly shaped by the collaborations with the community, as students frequently commented on the importance of experiential learning and interactions outside the university. We will also reflect on challenges, including funding, workload and administrative ones, alongside the benefits.

*Hannah Mathers is a senior lecturer in Geoscience Education. Hannah is passionate about working with learners through active learning, course co-creation and support of the broader student experience. Valuing of the richness inherent in, but also the barriers created by, field experience inform Hannah's approach to teaching which comprises over 15 years working in Higher Education (from GTA to senior lecturer). Outreach, engagement and recruitment activities also influence Hannah's teaching philosophy, which centres around creating meaning for the individual and connection with communities. Current research interests include inclusive field practice, identity formation in academia, building student autonomy through reflective practice and interdisciplinary working, spatial reasoning, maths anxiety and neurodiversity.*

*Anna McGregor is a senior lecturer in Ecology and the Environment, working on marine ecology and coastal issues, particularly related to soundscapes and the cultural dimensions of ecosystem services. She has redesigned and led several interdisciplinary approaches spanning methods from geography, biology, language and the arts to explore environmental questions. Her educational work incorporates interdisciplinarity, fieldwork learning, and student skills development, with a central aim on supporting and enhancing student employability.*

## **Where Do Interdisciplinary Students Belong? An SEMH-Informed Framework for Bridging Secondary and Higher Education Transitions**

**Chris Blunt and Kate Blunt - London School of Economics and Political Science**

Theme: Pathways, Target Audience: Those who consider themselves experienced, Level: Undergraduate

The UK education system presents students with a paradox: A-level study narrows their focus to three-to-four subjects, each typically with its own spatial home in the school – the Maths block, the Languages corridor – before university programmes increasingly demand integration across disciplines and navigation of fragmented campus spaces. For students with Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) needs, who often rely on environmental predictability and spatial anchoring for emotional regulation, this transition poses challenges that remain largely underexamined in the interdisciplinary education literature.

Transitioning from secondary to higher education involves not only academic but spatial, relational, and epistemic reorientations. Interdisciplinary programmes, which deliberately weaken disciplinary boundaries, may inadvertently remove scaffolding structures (spatial homes, departmental identities, consistent peer groups) that support student belonging, which are distinctively important for students with SEMH needs.

Drawing on approaches to environmental design for vulnerable learners in SEMH educational practice, we propose a bridging framework to prepare students for the distinctive challenges of interdisciplinary HE, suggesting design principles and practical implications for interdisciplinary programmes that promote belonging without replicating disciplinary silos. We emphasise three dimensions critical to belonging in interdisciplinary contexts: spatial legibility (how students "read" and locate themselves within educational environments), relational continuity (how consistent relationships are maintained across disciplinary boundaries), and epistemic anchoring (how students develop intellectual identity within/without traditional disciplinary labels).

Our analysis draws on the authors' complementary perspectives as a SENCo leading an SEMH Resource Base and an Associate Professor directing a compulsory interdisciplinary first-year undergraduate social sciences course.

*Chris Blunt a philosopher of medicine, and Associate Professor (Education) and LSE100 Co-Director at the London School of Economics. His research focuses on Evidence-Based Medicine, hierarchies of evidence, and other problems related to evidence and ethics in biomedical research. In particular, he has focused on hierarchies of evidence, an influential tool for ranking and evaluating the quality of evidence from clinical trials and other forms of medical research. His work is interdisciplinary and brings together perspectives from clinical practice with philosophy, policy, ethics and methodology. He is also interested in issues relating to genomic and "personalised" medicine, and questions of demarcation between science and pseudo-science, particularly with respect to complementary & alternative medicine.*

*Kate Blunt is a SENCO at a large inner-city London girls' secondary school with academy status and a mixed sixth form. She is a qualified mathematics teacher with a PGCE and the NASENCO qualification, and has an academic background in Statistics, enabling her to take a strategic, data-informed approach to inclusive practice while remaining closely connected to classroom teaching. Kate is also Head of an SEMH resource base and, as Mental Health Lead, works closely with senior leadership on safeguarding. She is particularly interested in how a rapidly changing world shapes the support children and young people need, with a strong focus on social, emotional, and mental health, inclusion, wellbeing, and equity.*

## **Experiences of creativity in interdisciplinary settings: a diffractive exploration**

**David Jay - Anglia Ruskin University**

Theme: Spaces for Creativity, Target Audience: Those who have some experience, Level: Undergraduate

How does creativity materialise across disciplines in a 21st-century university? Does interdisciplinarity allow us to deliver higher education differently? My doctoral research aims to explore these and more questions about interdisciplinary practice in contemporary higher education.

Drawing on the work of philosopher-physicist Karen Barad for its theoretical framework, my project explores diverse experiences of creative learning and teaching on two interdisciplinary modules at a UK university. The modules offer innovative approaches to learning, as well as creative forms of assessment, and include students from a range of disciplinary backgrounds. Through a series of walking intra-views, my aim was to understand how human and nonhuman participants work together in interdisciplinary settings, responding to contemporary challenges in the wider world. This includes exploring the possible benefits of different forms of creativity in interdisciplinary learning, and the crucial role played by campus spaces, environments, and material resources.

In this presentation, I'll provide some background to the project, before outlining the diffractive methods I developed and put into practice in the context of my research. These methods of analysis were based on the transdisciplinary notion of diffraction, which has been defined as a "more critical and difference-attentive mode of consciousness and thought" (Geerts and van der Tuin, 2021). The methods include the use of diffractive forms of questioning, as well as creative collage, to think differently, open up meaning, and explore experiences of creative learning and teaching from diverse perspectives.

*David Jay is a Senior Lecturer in the Faculty of Arts, Humanities, Education and Social Sciences at Anglia Ruskin University in Cambridge, UK. His background is in teaching language, linguistics and academic skills. Most recently, he has worked on higher education pedagogies, including communicative and creative approaches. David's current research explores materialised experiences of creativity in interdisciplinary settings.*

## **The Cambridgeshire Witches in Iambic Pentameter: one secondary school's interdisciplinary tales of success and development**

**Joanna Stell - Impington Village College**

Theme: Pathways, Target Audience: Those who have some experience, Level: Primary/Secondary Education

Interdisciplinary learning has entered our classrooms: and we want more. This talk focuses on one particular secondary school, just outside of Cambridge, which delivers interdisciplinary projects to students in year 7 to 9 as part of its International Baccalaureate curriculum. These forays into school-level interdisciplinarity have uncovered many a hurdle and hiccup in the planning and delivery of such projects; however, they have also offered a story of great success. Witches. Year after year, this collaboration between the English and history departments enables twelve-year-olds to pen and perform informative, empathetic, and powerful Shakespearean speeches about the victims and villains of the Cambridgeshire Witch-Trials. This is school level interdisciplinarity at its finest. Yet, how this success was achieved remains a mystery. By reviewing this project and presenting it to the wider interdisciplinary community, the hope is that we may encapsulate and extrapolate the

secrets to this success, preparing a blueprint that can inspire projects beyond the Cambridgeshire Witches. From a witch-hunt, to an interdisciplinary-hunt.

*Joanna Stell finds herself at the intersection of interdisciplinary learning and classroom teaching. As a Liberal Arts and Sciences graduate from the University of Birmingham, Joanna has maintained an interest in interdisciplinarity within her new context at one of England's few International Baccalaureate state schools. Here, Joanna teaches both maths and the IB's Theory of Knowledge course as well as using the school's Interdisciplinary Units at Key Stage 3 as the focal point for research into school-level interdisciplinarity.*

### **Systems Thinking as vehicle for ID Collaboration** **Coyan Tromp - University of Amsterdam**

Theme: Pathways, Target Audience: Those who have some experience, Level: Undergraduate

Since 2022, UvA's interfaculty Research Priority Area "Energy Transition through the Lens of Sustainable Development Goals" (ENLENS) has led to many valuable seminars on how to accelerate the shift towards a more sustainable energy regime in Europe. Based on these seminars, we developed an elective open to bachelor students of a wide variety of disciplinary backgrounds. Leading researchers address important questions such as: How can we end our fossil fuel dependency? Where do energy and climate policies complement each other, and where do they clash? What does the twin challenge of circular chemistry and circular economy entail? Can we design cities that are energy neutral? What is the role of legislation in the energy transition and how does this relate to ethical issues such as energy democracy and energy justice? After examination of these topics, students select a preferred topic for the final group assignment. In interdisciplinary teams, they work out both barriers and promising pathways that can help accelerate the energy transition. We use systems thinking to analyse interactions between the different disciplines and implied (f)actors, thus gaining deeper understanding in the issues at hand and what might be smart leverage points for interventions. Systems mapping helps to envision and anticipate the effects of proposed solutions, and facilitates discussions and collaboration across disciplines. We'd like to exchange ideas with interested parties on how systems thinking can function as vehicle for interdisciplinary, and possibly international collaboration where students with different backgrounds work together on the energy transition.

*Coyan Tromp is assistant professor and curriculum developer at the Institute for Interdisciplinary Studies, University of Amsterdam. She co-developed the Future Planet Studies bachelor's program in which beta and gamma disciplines are integrated to tackle global sustainability challenges such as climate change, energy, food and water issues. She continues to initiate and lead future-focused sustainability projects across UvA faculties. As Philosopher of Science her role within the Research Priority Area "Energy Transition through the Lens of Sustainable Development Goals" (ENLENS) is to help build bridges between researchers with various disciplinary backgrounds and to translate state-of-the-art research insights into interdisciplinary education.*

## **From Silos to Streams: Enacting Fluency Across Disciplines**

**Maria Charalambous - Regent's University London**

Theme: Pathways, Target Audience: Those who have some experience, Level: Undergraduate

Interdisciplinary learning is increasingly recognised for its value in higher education, yet its curriculum design often remains implicit. While graduate attributes and learning outcomes frequently express interdisciplinary aspirations, their translation into teaching and assessment is less often examined.

This talk explores how the graduate attribute Fluency Across Disciplines (FAD) is realised in the undergraduate curriculum of a UK independent university. FAD is embedded in the learning outcome Interdisciplinary Perspectives, which frames students' ability – across levels of study - to recognise, apply, and integrate insights from different disciplinary and professional contexts.

Drawing on 37 modules purposively selected from the Common Curriculum, Electives, and subject cores across three programmes (one each in social sciences, creative arts, and business), the study examines how interdisciplinarity is designed into learning outcomes, teaching practices, and assessment. Module specifications were analysed using Reflexive Thematic Analysis, guided by three design lenses: Intent (conceptual framing), Opportunities (how learning and teaching methods enable engagement with interdisciplinarity), and Evidence (how assessment recognises interdisciplinary learning).

The findings challenge the assumption that interdisciplinary graduate attributes can be delivered through a single pedagogic model. Instead, Fluency Across Disciplines is enacted through distinct design logics, positioning interdisciplinarity variously as an epistemic foundation, a thematic inquiry, a means of disciplinary identity formation, a method for idea generation and planning, or a mechanism for functional integration. This design-focused lens offers practical implications for staff development, assessment design, and programme-level coherence in interdisciplinary curricula.

*Maria Charalambous is Professor, Associate Provost (Learning & Teaching) at Regent's University London, where she leads institutional learning, teaching, and assessment strategy and academic development. Her research interests include curriculum design, liberal arts education, interdisciplinarity, graduate attributes, and creative leadership, informed by experience across the British, American, and Cypriot education systems.*

## **Many Disciplines, One Melody: Designing Inclusive Music Learning Through Interdisciplinary Collaboration**

**Tiffany Roman - Kennesaw State University**

Theme: Collaboration, Target Audience: Those who have some experience, Level: Primary/Secondary Education

In this session, I will detail how faculty, university staff, doctoral students, and undergraduate students working in various fields (Instructional Technology, Music Education, Computer Science, and Business) collaborated to address a problem of practice in elementary music classrooms. Young learners struggle with the complex process of learning to read music, particularly students with special needs (Kivijärvi & Väkevä, 2020). To better support students with disabilities in playing standard music notation, a music teacher partnered with an instructional technology professor to design SpectrumPlay, a technology that enables personalized music learning at scale in inclusive music classrooms (Collins &

Roman, 2024; Roman et al., 2024). Working in partnership with computer science undergraduate and graduate students, Roman and Collins created a cloud-based software that addresses music complexity through simple, color-based music notation scaffolds with audio note reinforcement. The tool is meant to be used in conjunction with a color-coded melodic instrument, allowing students to transition from learning to read music to playing independently. Students can choose the level of visual support needed as they move towards standard notation. To assess the tool's efficacy, the software was piloted with over 1,600 primary students in four large public elementary schools in southeastern U.S. The data collected and analyzed indicated a positive correlation between students' use of the tool, which embeds instructional strategies that motivate students, and music learning. In addition to highlighting the project's successes and challenges, attendees will learn practical strategies for fostering interdisciplinary collaboration to address authentic problems of practice in classroom settings.

*Tiffany Roman is an Associate Professor in the School of Instructional Technology and Innovation at Kennesaw State University. Roman holds a Ph.D. in Instructional Systems Technology from Indiana University and her M.Ed. and BFA are from the University of Notre Dame. She serves as the Associate Editor of Active Learning in Higher Education. Her scholarship examines how the design and development of learning technologies, technology-enhanced instructional practices, and active learning environments support student engagement, improve student learning outcomes, and advance design education practices.*

## **Create a Course Challenge**

**Marleen van der Meerand and Andrea Manneke - University of Amsterdam**

Theme: Wildcard, Target Audience: Those who have some experience, Level: Undergraduate

The Institute for Interdisciplinary Studies challenges all University of Amsterdam students to think about how education can best be organised, what topics and teaching methods should be covered and what role students and lecturers play in this. Therefore, for many years now, we organize the Create a Course Challenge: a competition where students submit their own ideas for new education. The winning idea will be developed in an interdisciplinary elective, available for all UvA students at undergraduate level. Students are encouraged to think outside the box about how education can be fun, challenging and meaningful.

One of the great outcomes of this competition is the creativity students bring to the table. Since they are not educational developers and are not aware of any restrictions, their ideas for education are often very original and potentially a great addition to education.

Crossing boundaries is what this challenge is all about: Not only between students and lecturers and between faculties and disciplines, but also cooperation between academia and society. We believe this challenge is the perfect way to give students a say in the curriculum, enhance interdisciplinary, creative and innovative education, and co-create courses together with students, all of this in a very fun way.

During the short paper presentation we want to give you practical tools to develop such a challenge at your own university, since the concept is easily transferrable. We would like to share our best and worst practices on the challenge, and on co-developing education with students.

<https://iis.uva.nl/en/educational-innovation/student-engagement/create-a-course-challenge.html>

*Andrea Manneke (MSc) and Marleen van der Meer (MSc) are educational developers at the Institute of Interdisciplinary Studies at the University of Amsterdam, the Netherlands. They are responsible for the UvA wide interdisciplinary elective and minor programme, which has a*

*focus on current issues in academia and society. Moreover, they develop the interdisciplinary honours programme for highly motivated students. The programme has a strong innovative and creative character, and serves as a testbed for higher education.*

## **Meta-learning maps as artefacts to catalyse and visualise interdisciplinary learning**

**Ash Brockwell - London Interdisciplinary School**

Theme: Pathways, Target Audience: Those who consider themselves experienced, Level: Undergraduate

Meta-learning has been variously defined in education literature as a process of learning about (a) learning in general, (b) one's own learning, or (c) how to learn a specific discipline. Within the specific context of interdisciplinary (ID) learning and teaching, we have conceptualised meta-learning as students' ability to reflect critically on their own learning in relation to a framework of ID or mixed methods principles and practices.

In this presentation, we will illustrate how the process of creating a meta-learning map can facilitate structured reflection and enable students to identify strengths and areas for improvement within their own work. The output - the map itself - can serve as both a summative assessment and a means of communicating the value of ID learning to a wider audience.

We will present examples of outstanding student work (names TBC, consent will be obtained) that showcase conceptual understanding, visual impact, and the creative use of metaphor.

*Ash Brockwell is an interdisciplinary academic, consultant, and visual artist with an MBiochem in Biochemistry, MSc Environmental Anthropology, and a PhD in Education. He is the Mixed Methods Lead at London Interdisciplinary School and Programme Lead for the new Masters in Education launching in September 2016.*

## **Guardians of Collaboration: Assembling Disciplines and Communities for Impact**

**Steven Seymour, Ailsa Dollard, Tricia Greenwood, Ann Urmston and Emma Gillaspay - University of Lancashire**

Theme: Collaboration, Target Audience: Those who are new to interdisciplinarity, Level: Undergraduate

Interdisciplinary collaboration with authentic voices transcends traditional boundaries and power dynamics which can prevent shared decision making (Joseph-Williams, Edwards and Elwyn, 2014). This submission presents an innovative model for community collaboration through Congress Days, which bring together students from different courses, to engage with community-led learning experiences.

Our model demonstrates how Interprofessional Learning can be sustainably embedded across curricula through strategic leadership, shared resources, and pedagogical innovation.

Our Congress Days focus on community engagement, where local services and groups deliver workshops co-facilitated by individuals with lived experience. These sessions provide authentic insights into service provision and user perspectives, creating a foundation for empathy and understanding beyond disciplinary boundaries.

Building on this our Communication Congress Day where workshops take a case-based learning approach, students work in cross-disciplinary teams to address real-world scenarios designed by community partners and those who access their groups. Themes include physical

disabilities, learning disabilities, and mental health conditions, with groups such as Spring into Action and the MS Society. Community partners deliver the workshop, students collaboratively explore solutions, share ideas, and reflect on diverse approaches. This experiential model raises the profile of local organisations and the University equipping students with transferable skills (Lunn, Urmston, Seymour and Manfrin 2020). They are learning with from and about (CAIPE, 2025) each other's professions, while developing their understanding of third sector groups and holistic care. Interprofessional education sessions are designed to support heutagogical learning (Gillaspy and Vasilica, 2021). Students feedback their plans to the groups who offer lived insight and practical feedback, whilst gaining ideas for development.

*Steven Seymour is a Lecturer in Interprofessional Education and Patient and Public Engagement in the School of Pharmacy and Biomedical Sciences at the University of Lancashire. He designs and delivers cross-disciplinary learning experiences for students in pharmacy, biomedical sciences, nursing, medicine, and allied health. His work fosters collaboration, communication, and person-centred care through real-world scenarios co-produced with service users and carers. Steven also leads initiatives with Comensus to embed lived experience into education, ensuring healthcare training remains grounded in community needs. He is passionate about co-production, empathy, and teamwork, supporting the development of reflective and compassionate healthcare professionals.*

*Ailsa Dollard is a lecturer in Adult Nursing and Lead for Inter Professional Education in the School of Nursing and Midwifery at the University of Lancashire. Ailsa is a qualified Health Visitor and prior to joining the university worked in the North West of England specialising in Safeguarding. She has gained her Fellowship of the Hea and has helped to develop innovative IPE sessions and expanded her research portfolio in the areas of impact of teaching on development of IPE competencies, serious games for IPE skills, and IPE faculty training.*

*Ann Urmston is a Senior Lecturer at the University of Lancashire with almost three decades of experience in pharmacy education. She leads the design, delivery, and evaluation of interprofessional learning and patient/public involvement in teaching, ensuring students gain authentic, patient-centered perspectives. Ann has published research on interprofessional education and innovative patient-as-teacher approaches, advancing collaborative practice in healthcare. Her commitment extends beyond academia through active engagement in community health events, mentoring students and promoting wellbeing. In recognition of her contributions, she was awarded a Fellowship by the National Forum of Health and Wellbeing in 2022. Ann's work exemplifies the integration of education, research, and public engagement to prepare future healthcare professionals for collaborative, patient-focused care.*

## Lightning Talks

### **Collaborating Across Boundaries: Co-Creating Sustainable Finance Learning Between Academia and Industry**

**Patricia Perlman-Dee - University of Manchester**

Theme: Collaboration, Target Audience: Those who are new to interdisciplinarity, Level: University-industry partnership

This lightning talk explores how a collaboration across disciplinary and organisational boundaries can create new pathways for interdisciplinary learning. It presents a partnership between an academic in a Russell Group university and an ESG (Environmental, Social and Governance) investment professional who co-developed an interactive session for a new Master's in Sustainable Business. The session created brought together ideas from finance, sustainability, and ethics, and gave students opportunities to analyse live investment cases and debate what "sustainable value" means when real money is at stake.

This collaboration demonstrates how creative spaces for interdisciplinarity can be formed through dialogue between theory and practice, and how digital connectivity enables professionals and educators to design meaningful, applied learning experiences. The lightning talk contributes to the theme of Collaboration to support interdisciplinary opportunities by showing how shared expertise can inspire innovative curriculum design and empower learners to apply interdisciplinary thinking beyond the university setting.

*Patricia Perlman-Dee, CFA, is a Professor in Finance at University of Manchester. She has a Masters in Finance, a PGCE and is the Academic Director of Custom Programs at Alliance Manchester Business School. She has extensive experience working in large financial corporations such as Citigroup, JP Morgan, Nomura and Barclays in Manchester, London and New York. Patricia has created and teaches a range of courses across Undergraduate, Post Graduate, MBA and Executive Education. In every year since 2019 (up to including 2024), she was awarded Faculty of Humanities AMBS Outstanding teaching award (winner and commended). Patricia is an experienced presenter from her professional career. She regularly presents on national and international educational conferences such as Advance HE and Edulearn conferences. In addition, she has been the key speaker on several large charity functions, helping to raise over £500,000 for the charities.*

### **Identifying the Intergenerational Possibilities of Interdisciplinary Collaboration**

**Danielle Cameron - London School of Economics and Political Science**

Theme: Collaboration, Target Audience: Those who are new to interdisciplinarity, Level: Undergraduate

By drawing upon age studies, contemporary philosophies of unschooling, and education-based understandings of community, this lightning talk casts light on the intergenerational politics and possibilities of interdisciplinary practice. I foreground the relationship between interdisciplinarity's transcendence of disciplinary boundaries and intergenerationality's troubling of age-based relationality as fertile ground from which interdisciplinary collaboration can grow. In order to do so, I build upon works such as Madeline Lane-McKinley's *Solidarity with Children: An Essay Against Adult Supremacy* (2025), and Harry Blatterer's theorisation of adulthood.

Reflecting upon my experiences of both teaching and organising events for LSE100, LSE's flagship interdisciplinary course, this lightning talk offers a jumping-off point for academic and professional services colleagues to contemplate how interdisciplinary collaboration can also be a radical form of intergenerational collaboration, and the ways in which this can be practically implemented. This lightning talk, then, responds

directly to the conference themes regarding opportunities for interdisciplinary collaboration and making space for creativity in interdisciplinarity.

*Danielle Cameron is a Fellow in Interdisciplinary Social Science at the London School of Economics and Political Science. Her research examines constructions of age, intergenerational power (im)balances, and the relationship between definitions of adulthood and different forms of capital. Danielle's work foregrounds the significance of place, particularly physical cities and digital spaces, in the critical study of age. In her PhD thesis, completed at the University of East Anglia, Danielle theorised a framework for the literary and social study of age by examining how a selection of New York novels reproduce and resist neoliberal narratives of American adulthood. She is currently developing her first book, tentatively titled Reimagining Adulthood in an Age of Global Crisis.*

## **Interdisciplinary opportunities to embody health and wellbeing practice through literacy and numeracy related pedagogical content knowledge**

**Alison Murray and Nuzhat Uthmani - University of Stirling**

Theme: Pathways, Target Audience: Those who have some experience, Level: Undergraduate

This project seeks to explore ways for preservice primary student teachers to develop understanding, knowledge and proficiencies in planning and teaching Education Scotland's 'responsibility for all' areas of health and wellbeing, literacy and numeracy. The initial teacher programme embraced and integrated these curricular area into one module. The learning cycle commenced weekly with a health and wellbeing concept, introduced, unpacked and explored discretely. Using a Bruner spiral curricular approach, the HWB concept was then revisited and progressed on two further occasions, integrated into literacy and numeracy space, before moving to the next learning cycle. This continued for a series of 10 concepts over two years, at which time students were provided a celebratory opportunity (Health and Wellbeing student fair; a mastery American science fair style) to share their emerged practice, receive feedback, and engage in reflective discussions with fair visitors and judges and peers. This preceded placement, where students gave their HWB practice(s) a go. Mixed methods capture how students felt before and after placement, within which a facilitator opportunity to apply their own IDL planned progressions, alongside their perceived efficacy to teach as found contextually relevant and meaningful to respective classes. Through a triangulated stakeholder approach; student, school-based mentor and university tutor, the programme seeks to take collected and collated insights forward to our initial teacher education interdisciplinary practice around health and wellbeing.

*Alison Murray is a lecturer in teacher education, focusing on health and wellbeing, physical and general education, having enjoyed a background through sport, coaching, physical education and community health-related fitness, from Mexico, the US, to the UK. Her particular interest is in primary physical education and whole-school approaches to extend curricular benefits through healthy active living.*

*Nuzhat Uthmani is lecturer in Primary Education and an avid health and wellbeing team member. Committed to her advocacy for global citizenship and antiracist education, Nuzhat shares her primary school practice across teacher education, alongside other areas of expertise across the wider primary program.*

## **Teaching Criminological Theory Through Interdisciplinarity: A First-Year Case Study in Critical Thinking** **Evelyn Svingen - University of Birmingham**

Theme: Pathways, Target Audience: Those who have some experience, Level: Undergraduate

This paper presents a case study of interdisciplinary curriculum design within a first-year module, Criminological Theory I, at the University of Birmingham. The module was created to address a persistent challenge in criminology: the fragmentation of theory and the difficulty students face in connecting diverse explanatory frameworks. Drawing on interdisciplinary education principles and analytic criminology, the course invites students to explore how different disciplines—such as psychology, sociology, biology, and philosophy—approach the question of crime through distinct yet complementary epistemologies.

To examine the pedagogical impact of this design, qualitative data were collected through focus groups and written reflections, then thematically analysed. The findings suggest that interdisciplinary framing enhances students' understanding of what constitutes a theory, improving their ability to compare, critique, and integrate perspectives across domains. Students particularly valued structured activities that made disciplinary assumptions explicit and reported greater confidence in applying theoretical reasoning to empirical problems.

The paper argues that embedding explicit epistemological reflection within disciplinary teaching promotes critical thinking and conceptual clarity, equipping students to navigate complex knowledge systems. It also identifies practical challenges—such as balancing depth with breadth and scaffolding abstract reasoning—that inform future redesign. By demonstrating how interdisciplinarity can enrich a core criminology module, this case contributes to broader debates about teaching theory in fragmented disciplines and offers transferable strategies for fostering integrative thinking in undergraduate education.

*Evelyn Svingen is an Assistant Professor in Criminology at the University of Birmingham. Her research explores interdisciplinary and biosocial approaches to understanding crime, cooperation, and punishment, with a focus on integrating insights from psychology, neuroscience, and social theory. She is the author of *Evolutionary Criminology and Cooperation* (Palgrave, 2023), which won the 2024 European Society of Criminology Book Award. Evelyn is also the lead editor of *Building and Sustaining Interdisciplinary Higher Education: Lessons from LANS* (Palgrave, forthcoming), drawing on the team's experience teaching across liberal arts and natural sciences. Her pedagogical work emphasises critical thinking, conceptual clarity, and epistemological awareness in theory teaching.*

## **Interdisciplinary graduate outcomes: the link between effective cross-functional collaboration within the university and interdisciplinary graduate success outside it**

**Anna Matei - London Interdisciplinary School**

Theme: Collaboration, Target Audience: Those who consider themselves experienced, Level: Undergraduate

The London Interdisciplinary School's redesign of undergraduate education shows that effective interdisciplinary collaboration is an enabler of graduate opportunity. The LIS approach extends interdisciplinarity beyond the curriculum and teaching methods to ways of working, creating a new model for professional staff-Faculty cooperation. This is essential to effectively balancing employability and academic rigour, and it positions professional services teams as co-creators of institutional knowledge and even course design and delivery. The result: above average WP participation rates and graduate outcomes (LIS' first undergraduate cohort included 54% widening participation students; 85% of the

cohort were in skilled employment or further study 12 months after graduation, an outcome that was identical for graduates from backgrounds of compound disadvantage – or none). In this lightning talk, we will present the ways professional staff and Faculty collaborate when we remove discipline-based departmental boundaries, and share some of the uniquely interdisciplinary graduate pathways that emerge as a result.

*Anna Matei is Head of Futures at the London Interdisciplinary School. She studied and taught History before building a startup career spanning nearly all business functions. She believes that education plays a crucial role in tackling systemic social problems, and now works on the intersection of academic learning and practical employability skills, managing career support programming, from 1:1 coaching to whole-cohort events, on all degree courses. She also researches effective employability and career support in higher education, and is especially interested in the power of interdisciplinary and problem-based guidance and decision-making, and proactive network facilitation.*

### **Standing out from the crowd: What perspectives do students have about their identity when enrolled in a distinctive postgraduate multidisciplinary program?**

**Jay Rixon, Mary Keys, Clare Dunn and Lorna Sibbett - The Open University**

Theme: Wildcard, Target Audience: Those who consider themselves experienced, Level: Postgraduate

The unique and innovative MA/MSc Open qualification offered by The Open University has completed one life-cycle. Eight years on, the qualification team reflects how much has changed, how are 'well rounded' students and employees are valuable in an environment of complex challenges and problems that can't be solved from simply one perspective. How do students on the qualification see themselves? What do they value when offered the opportunity to study across subjects, disciplines and traditional boundaries?

To understand students' views and what they value in interdisciplinary study, a Student Voice programme has been launched with sessions, forums, themed discussions, and questionnaires. These varied formats aim to encourage student participation and will highlight how interdisciplinary learning helps students become effective connectors, problem solvers, and innovators.

Can we crowdsource questions we have as a qualification team about communicating the value of this type of study? Can we share feedback from our students with you, identify any gaps in our understanding, and explore potential directions for the qualification's future?

*Jay Rixon is the Qualification Manager for the MA/MSc Open, leading the development and delivery of an innovative, interdisciplinary postgraduate programme. She supports curriculum design, educational projects, and strategic initiatives that enhance student experience and promote flexible, inclusive learning. Which builds on her experience from FE and qualification development. A Fellow of SEDA and Senior Fellow of the HEA, and mentor and reviewer for the OU's internal programme. Jay is a dedicated and focused education professional, passionate about widening participation, fostering academic community, and enabling learners to thrive across subject boundaries.*

**Mapping Boundary Crossing Mechanisms in Postdigital Interdisciplinary Learning at the Edinburgh Futures Institute: A Core Elective Comparative Case Study**  
**Kunqi Huang - University of Edinburgh**

Theme: Pathways, Target Audience: Those who have some experience, Level: Undergraduate

Challenge-led, wicked-problem-driven interdisciplinary courses are increasingly common, placing students in real-world, multi-stakeholder and reflection-intensive contexts that require frequent Boundary Crossing (BC) across disciplinary practices, identities, and collaboration modes. Although current research has proposed BC learning mechanisms-identification, coordination, reflection, and transformation-there is limited work on how these mechanisms operate and where turning points emerge in authentic interdisciplinary processes, how postdigital conditions shape their enactment, and how patterns differ across learner pathways. This PhD research is situated in a postdigital context and takes Edinburgh Futures Institute's (EFI) undergraduate interdisciplinary programme as a main case. This study plans to conduct a comparative case study contrasting EFI interdisciplinary majors with single-discipline students taking interdisciplinary elective courses, examining similarities and differences in how BC mechanisms are triggered, enacted, and disrupted. This lightning talk will briefly introduce this PhD research plan and explain why it is timely and valuable to conduct.

*Kunqi Huang is a PhD student at the Moray House School of Education and Sport, University of Edinburgh, based at the Centre for Research in Digital Education within the Edinburgh Futures Institute. Her research mainly focuses on interdisciplinary education in the postdigital context, interested in students' experiences during interdisciplinary learning and comparative analysis. Prior to her PhD, Kunqi obtained her master's degree in education from the University of Edinburgh. In the 2025-2026 academic year, she serves as a Teaching Assistant for EFI's undergraduate course Students as Change Agents. Kunqi Huang's research interests include interdisciplinary education, comparative education, postdigital education, intercultural education, and interdisciplinary curriculum design.*

**Are we teaching information or developing understanding?**  
**Maximillian Afnan - London School of Economics and Political Science**

Theme: Pathways, Target Audience: Those who have some experience, Level: Undergraduate

This talk will present elements of recent practice from LSE100, a first-year interdisciplinary module taken by approximately 1900 students annually. The talk argues for the value of early exposure to interdisciplinary learning at the beginning of undergraduate study, because this is a time when students' disciplinary identities are still forming.

The talk suggests that one contribution of interdisciplinary education is to assist students to understand concepts rather than merely absorb information or master techniques. It presents a case study of a class exercise in which groups of students construct their own quantitative index to rank different countries' educational systems, and in doing so discover that technical analysis - selecting indicators and assigning weights - cannot proceed without making substantive value judgements. This pedagogical approach reveals that quantitative methods require, rather than replace, conceptual clarity. Introducing such integrative exercises early in students' university careers can foster habits of mind that resist the fragmentation that disciplinary specialisation often reinforces.

*Maximillian Afnan is an LSE Fellow, teaching on the London School of Economics' flagship "LSE100" interdisciplinary course, taken by all first-year undergraduates. He has contributed to the course's development, redesigning seminars on educational fairness. His pedagogical public engagement includes an article for Times Higher Education (2025) examining approaches that develop deep conceptual understanding rather than facilitating information assimilation. He holds a PGCertHE and has received a Teaching Excellence Award from the LSE Department of Government. His broader research in political theory addresses global democracy and deliberative theory, with publications in Critical Review of International Social and Political Philosophy, Res Publica, and European Journal of Political Theory. He has also supervised undergraduate research projects connecting political philosophy with public policy through LSE's Public Research Partners Initiative. He holds a BA and MPhil from the University of Oxford and a PhD from the London School of Economics.*

## **UG Persona Grata? Transdisciplinary Education and Customized Large Language Models** **Gerda van Roozendaal - University of Amsterdam**

Theme: Pathways, Target Audience: Those who consider themselves experienced, Level: Undergraduate

Transdisciplinary education helps students to deal with uncertainties real life problems may bring and will put students into contact with different stakeholder perspectives, which will aid developing meaningful solutions to wicked and complex problems. However, creating linkages between students and actors outside the educational institutions in the context of an educational program is challenging. Customized Large Language Models (CLLM) such as ChatGPT may help students prepare for transdisciplinary interaction with non-academic stakeholders, and at the same time may help to give successful feedback on end products by mimicking non-academic voices in a meaningful and feasible way. This lightning talk discusses the outcome of a study that I conducted. The talk may result in discussing steps towards understanding if, and how, CLLMs serve transdisciplinary education.

### References:

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Repko, Allen F. (2008), *Interdisciplinary Research: Process and Theory*. Sage Publications.

Thompson Klein, J. (2012), Research Integration: A comparative knowledge base, in Repko, A., Newell, W., & Szostak, R., *Case Studies in Interdisciplinary Research*. Sage, pp.283-298.

*Gerda van Roozendaal holds a degree in political science with a specialization in international relations from the University of Amsterdam (UvA). Van Roozendaal's Ph.D. research, conducted at the Amsterdam School for Social Science Research (UvA), focused on the influence of trade unions on the debate related to trade and labor standards. After working for 17 years at the University of Groningen - the last years as an Associate Professor - she currently serves as the Head of Interdisciplinary Studies of Beta-gamma, a Bachelor programme at the Institute of Interdisciplinary Studies of the University of Amsterdam.*

## **Admitting Learners with Range: A Cambridge Perspective** **Philip Graham - Homerton College, University of Cambridge**

Theme: Pathways, Target Audience: Those who have some experience, Level: Undergraduate

Homerton College, University of Cambridge has adapted admissions criteria for undergraduate architects and designers. Whereas the course requirements typically favour students with A-level abilities in art, maths and physics, we have now filtered for more generalist profiles to reflect built environment practice in times of climate emergency and a growing need for systems thinking across diverse fields. An ideal candidate would now bring subjects from both social and natural sciences, covering qualitative, quantitative, written, coded and visual methods, plus demonstrable artistic or design skills that are not necessarily assessed. Resulting challenges to admissions pathways are: more time intensive analysis of applications; fewer offer-holders achieving their grades as they are more stretched by their interdisciplinary ambition; applicants (and schools) need time to reposition their subject profiles. For the College, the method enables selection of dynamic candidates that other colleges overlook and a thriving discourse in 'the design sciences', at college level.

*Philip Graham is a Fellow and Director of Studies for architecture and design at Homerton College, University of Cambridge; a postdoctoral researcher at the Department of Architecture; an architect of almost 20 years at Cullinan Studio, London; a visiting researcher and teacher in sustainable housing design at Tampere University, Finland; and, a supervisor in both architecture and at the Cambridge Institute for Sustainability Leadership (CISL). He is funded as a 'UKRI Design Innovation Scholar' by the UK's Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) to develop systems-led ways of reducing housing demand through transdisciplinary design. He proposes novel ways of combining space and tenure so that living space might better match the variable needs of diverse households and a finite planet. At College level, he co-leads an initiative to broker dialogue between undergraduates of the 'design sciences' - a self-styled subject area comprising architecture, land economy, design, anthropology and politics.*

## **Jack of All Trades, Master of Research** **Adam Mountford - University of Birmingham**

Theme: Pathways, Target Audience: Those who have some experience, Level: Postgraduate

This lightning talk reflects on an educator's personal learning journey into interdisciplinarity and how that journey can inform more inclusive student support. Working in English for Academic Purposes at the University of Birmingham, the speaker occupies a role that sits alongside - rather than outside - students' learning experiences. Daily practice involves supporting international students across diverse disciplines, from business and engineering to the humanities, highlighting both cultural and disciplinary diversity in Higher Education. Seeking to build on this experience while remaining closely connected to the student perspective, the speaker recently began an MRes in Interdisciplinary Study, focusing on Cultural Intelligence (CQ) in Higher Education. This talk offers an opportunity to share how the MRes has so far provided a valuable forum for developing a focused interdisciplinary research project, while reflecting on how educators' own interdisciplinary learning can meaningfully support students.

*Adam Mountford is an educator, coach, and materials developer specialising in communication in international and intercultural contexts. He is a Cambridge DELTA-qualified teacher with approximately ten years' experience in English language teaching and academic skills*

*development, including extensive work in UK Higher Education. He currently works at the University of Birmingham's 'Birmingham International Academy', where his role spans teaching, curriculum and materials development, and professional development for staff supporting international students. Adam is an ILM Level 5 qualified coach and a Senior Fellow of the Higher Education Academy (SFHEA). Alongside his established practice in education, he is newer to interdisciplinary studies and is keen to build his knowledge in this area. He brings curiosity, reflectiveness, and a strong commitment to learning, and is particularly interested in how insights from across disciplines can enhance communication, intercultural understanding, and educational practice.*

## **Cultivating Citizen Scholars: developing interdisciplinary lifelong learning for adults** **Deirdre Macleod, Suzanne Hermiston and Jenny Scoles - University of Edinburgh**

Theme: Pathways, Target Audience: Those who are new to interdisciplinarity, Level: Foundation or Life-Long Learning or Secondary Education

Open access lifelong learning occupies a distinctive educational space, providing a key route into higher education-level learning for adults. But opportunities for interdisciplinary lifelong learning are often limited by short course formats, varied learner confidence and the disciplinary focus of much existing provision.

This lightning talk introduces the Cultivating Citizen Scholars project at the University of Edinburgh. The project explores how these, and other, constraints might be overcome. It starts from the premise that interdisciplinary lifelong learning is most effective when it is framed as a journey rather than as a single event and sustained meaningfully over time.

Cultivating Citizen Scholars brings together teaching staff and learners from the University's Centre for Open Learning as co-participants in exploratory groups, immersive workshops and reflective learning practices.

Our talk will highlight three lines of enquiry:

- the value of starting with shared questions, not disciplines
- the importance of treating lived experience as interdisciplinary expertise
- cultivating reflective practice as a form of critical 'connective tissue'

Our insights may interest those who are exploring interdisciplinarity within lifelong learning, foundation-level or secondary-level education.

*Deirdre Macleod is a Lecturer in Art at the Centre for Open Learning, University of Edinburgh. She has a background in human geography and worked in public policy analysis for 15 years before studying, and then teaching, art. She is also a PhD candidate in Human Geography in the School of Geosciences at the University where she is researching the potential for artistic methods to contribute to geographical fieldwork methodologies. A practising visual artist, Deirdre pursues an interdisciplinary spatial practice which combines her academic training in human geography and interest in the natural world with artistic methods. She has exhibited and performed within the UK, Europe and the US and works collaboratively with visual artists, writers and dancers in person and remotely. Most recently, she was selected to perform a collaborative mapping project, *You Are Here*, at *Art in Odd Places* (2024) in New York City. <https://care.artinoddplaces.org/artists/deirdre-macleod/>.*

*Suzanne Hermiston has worked in education for close to 20 years in a number of educational settings including Further and Higher Education sectors. In her current role as Director of Open Studies within the Centre for Open Learning at the University of Edinburgh, she is responsible for*

*overseeing lifelong learning across Art and Design, Social Sciences, Humanities and STEM. Suzanne is a passionate supporter of continuing education and the need to consider the needs of adult learners – particularly those who face barriers to accessing education. This requires a different approach to the course offer, not only the content and delivery method but also the learning environment in which this is delivered. During her career, Suzanne has often worked at the interface between disciplines, successfully combining Science and Language at Edinburgh Zoo and Art and Science at the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh.*

*Jenny Scoles is an Academic Developer at the University's Institute for Academic Development. As part of her recent 18-month fellowship designing and teaching on the MA Interdisciplinary Futures at Edinburgh Futures Institute, Jenny was a co-researcher on a University-funded project 'Crossing the Line', led by Dr David Overend. This project team researched student and staff perspectives of enacting interdisciplinary teaching and learning in practice, and this is an on-going, longitudinal study over the four year programme. They also developed a Toolkit and Manifesto for Interdisciplinary Learning and Teaching, which has been well received and of great interest to the wider HE community. She is highly invested in advancing the University's contribution internally and externally to scholarship and practice in the growing area of Interdisciplinary Learning and Teaching; an area of strategic value to the Curriculum Transformation Programme.*

### **Designing for creativity in interdisciplinary learning Febe de Vos - Utrecht University**

Theme: Spaces for Creativity, Target Audience: Those who consider themselves experienced, Level: Undergraduate

In this talk I will discuss my PhD research on creativity in interdisciplinary learning in the context of the bachelor program Liberal Arts and Sciences (LAS) at Utrecht University. In order to integrate insights from multiple disciplines on a complex problem, creativity is required (Repko & Szostak, 2026, pp. 278-281). But how do you approach this as an undergraduate student performing interdisciplinary research independently for the first time? How do students experience the role of creativity in integration? I will discuss my project that centers around these questions and insights I gathered so far. Questions will be raised about what makes an integration process creative and successful, and what aspects of a learning environment are relevant to facilitate this. With the audience we will explore best practices with supporting creativity in the interdisciplinary learning environment. What are the most promising possibilities for designing for creativity in interdisciplinary learning?

Reference: Repko, A. F., & Szostak, R. (2026). *Interdisciplinary research: Process and theory* (Fifth edition). Sage.

*Febe de Vos is working as a Junior Assistant Professor at the bachelor program Liberal Arts and Sciences (School of Liberal Arts, Utrecht University). She combines PhD research on the role and facilitation of creativity in interdisciplinary learning with teaching and supervising courses in the interdisciplinary LAS curriculum. Febe has a background in Liberal Arts and Sciences, Philosophy, and Ethics. She worked as an integration expert for the Interdisciplinary Teaching Programme of Utrecht University. Febe contributed to previous research on the facilitation of epistemic fluency of undergraduate students during the interdisciplinary research process (Van Lambalgen & De Vos, 2023). van Lambalgen, R. M., & De Vos, F. (2023). Facilitating epistemic fluency of undergraduate students during the interdisciplinary research process. *Frontiers in Education*, 8. <https://doi.org/10.3389/feduc.2023.1108344>*

## **Curation Kills: How Interdisciplinary Practice Changes When It Becomes Visible?**

**Anthony Skerik - University of Edinburgh**

Theme: Wildcard, Target Audience: Those who have some experience, Level: Undergraduate

Interdisciplinary work is increasingly made visible through public outputs such as blogs, newsletters, case studies, and reflective narratives. These artifacts are often treated as transparent representations of interdisciplinary practice. This lightning talk pauses on the earlier and less visible moment of the curatorial work that goes into defining themes, assembling contributors, and shaping a public conversation before interdisciplinary practice is rendered visible. Drawing on experience co-editing an interdisciplinary blog series, the talk explores how these upstream decisions function as acts of translation rather than neutral organisation. In translating complex, lived practice into coherent public narratives, some forms of interdisciplinarity become legible and shareable, while others are simplified, excluded, or never invited into view. Once circulated, these representations begin to stand in for interdisciplinarity itself shaping what the public sees. The talk closes by asking who shapes these public representations, and what is quietly filtered out as interdisciplinarity becomes presentable.

*Anthony Skerik is an undergraduate student in Interdisciplinary Futures at the University of Edinburgh, where he works across teaching, research, and public-facing interdisciplinary initiatives. He was a co-editor of a Teaching Matters blog series on interdisciplinary education and, where he worked closely with academic staff and contributors to curate public conversations about curriculum design, interdisciplinary practice, and student experience in addition to writing his own contributions to the series. Through this editorial role, he is particularly interested in the often-invisible curatorial decisions that shape how interdisciplinarity is represented and understood. Within his programme, Anthony has led co-creation workshops, contributed to multiple academic panels, and supported projects that position students as active agents of change in educational settings. Alongside his studies, Anthony works within the University's Information Services Group on large-scale digital transformation projects, contributing to web governance, accessibility, and content strategy initiatives across the University's web estate.*

## **Creativity Without Boundaries: Rethinking Learning for a Changing World**

**Courtney McLeod, Bauer Media UK**

Theme: Spaces for Creativity, Target Audience: Those who have some experience, Level: Industry

This talk shares insight from an educational model that is not tied to academic norms or boundaries. Drawing on interdisciplinary approaches delivered inside the industry; it gives a unique and optimistic perspective on the role of interdisciplinary education. With creativity at its heart, Bauer Academy operates inside one of the world's biggest media companies and delivers learning solutions to over 100 employers. Designed to create new interdisciplinary pathways, it enables employers to co-create programmes and develop learning communities across organisational boundaries.

Across all subject areas, Bauer Academy develops creativity as a critical capability. Learners tackle complex issues and synthesise knowledge in rapidly changing environments. From its curriculum design processes to the intellectual and physical spaces it provides, creativity isn't added on - it's embedded in. This talk highlights that creativity is an essential element of learning in today's world and requires new forms of collaboration between pedagogy and industry practice.

*Courtney McLeod has spent 15 years developing interdisciplinary teaching outside academic boundaries. Originally working as a Visiting Professor in Italy and Academic Advisor and Teaching Fellow in Scotland, Courtney left academia to create her own industry based educational model. The Bauer Academy operates inside one of the world's biggest media companies, Bauer Media Group. It is now a multimillion-pound business delivering learning solutions across Europe to over 100 employers, including BBC, CH4, Amazon and the United Nations. Based on interdisciplinary approaches, Courtney designed the Bauer Academy to innovate work-based learning and provide an employer-led alternative to Higher Education. Her work gives a unique perspective on the impact of interdisciplinary teaching and learning in an environment that transcends universities. Courtney is currently completing a PhD at De Montfort University.*

## **Interdisciplinary, International, Intergenerational: The power of cohort-building for collaboration in teaching and learning about ageing and care**

**Emilie McSwiggan - University of Edinburgh**

Theme: Collaboration, Target Audience: Those who have some experience, Level: Postgraduate

This talk reflects on learning from an interdisciplinary doctoral training programme, the Advanced Care Research Centre Academy. This involved four cohorts, each of about ten PhD students, from diverse disciplinary backgrounds spanning the sciences, arts and humanities; undertaking a training year centred on ageing and care.

The training year had a strong emphasis on cohort-building – through curricular requirements, such as project-based challenge courses, and extra-curriculars, such as group retreats and social activities.

Drawing on multiple sources of evidence – including a qualitative study, programme evaluations, and outputs from student-led projects – we show how this has created a community of early-career scholars who know how to collaborate across disciplines, are enthusiastic about doing so, and whose closest academic colleagues span diverse disciplines. We reflect that this emphasis on cohort-building amounts to a long-term investment in interdisciplinary working and explore how our learning might be relevant to other interdisciplinary courses and programmes.

*Emilie McSwiggan is a final-year PhD student within the Advanced Care Research Centre (ACRC) Academy, and a Public Health teaching fellow at the University of Edinburgh. She is enthusiastic about teaching and student development, and has been involved in organising several successful collaborative student-led grant applications, projects and events within the ACRC Academy. She recently completed an internship within the Academy to explore how the training year might be developed into stand-alone interdisciplinary teaching on ageing and care, in future.*

## **The final year project as a creative interdisciplinary space**

**Abigail Bellamy-Carter - University of Birmingham**

Theme: Spaces for Creativity, Target Audience: Those who have some experience, Level: Undergraduate

The undergraduate interdisciplinary Liberal Arts and Sciences programme at Birmingham culminates in a final year independent research project (IRP). Whilst some students complete a single discipline project alongside single honours students in a department of their choosing, most complete our bespoke IRP module which requires an 'approach beyond disciplinarity'. Within one module, students determine their own topic of study, which disciplines they wish to consider in their research, and their own methodology. They are supported by a supervisory

team, consisting of an 'expert' and an interdisciplinarian, but the projects are driven by the student. This is the most freedom of inquiry the students will have experienced in their studies. This lightning presentation aims to report how this freedom of inquiry gives rise to creative and unique research projects, often exceeding research requirements expected of undergraduate students and leading to new ways of thinking for both the student and supervisors.

*Abigail Bellamy-Carter teaches on a range of University of Birmingham interdisciplinary programmes, including Liberal Arts and Sciences, Natural Sciences, and BAsC Arts and Sciences. She has led the dissertation modules for the courses for 5 years as well as teaching on the other core modules. Her educational background is in the sciences, with an interest in nanoscience and other areas of interdisciplinary science.*

## **Final Plenary**

### **Time, trust and creativity: A student-staff collaborative ethnography on an interdisciplinary undergraduate programme Sara Albakri, Jenny Scoles, Sora Choo, Polly Dipper - University of Edinburgh**

In this session, a group of students and staff present an account of co-research, which explores undergraduate students' experiences of creative activities in a new undergraduate interdisciplinary programme. Adopting a collaborative ethnographic lens helped this staff-student partnership create a collegiate research space to understand qualitative data collected during the students' first and second years. The paper analyses focus group and open-response survey data that trace students' evolving attitudes and practices towards non-conventional interdisciplinary teaching approaches that foster creativity. These approaches include pass/fail assessments, group research projects with external stakeholders, and core modules based on developing reflection.

Among a multitude of rich findings, we found students who had previously felt unseen by conventional educational curricula were expressing a sense of belonging and acceptance of the whole-self in the interdisciplinary classroom, which afforded creative thinking and doing. The pass/fail assessment model was crucial in supporting this space. While students gradually trusted the process of non-traditional teaching and assessment method, this trust took longer to develop than is afforded in traditional modular courses.

The staff-student co-researcher nature of this project highlights how staff can support students to develop pedagogical insights into interdisciplinary teaching decisions, which can be experienced in the first few years as overwhelming and uncomfortable. This empowers students' agency in their educational experiences. It also offers staff a space to engage with authentic student voices in an area of curriculum design that is still to be explored and chartered, centring staff AND students at the helm.

*Sara Albakri is an undergraduate student in her third year of the Interdisciplinary Futures MA programme at Edinburgh Futures Institute, University of Edinburgh.*

*Polly Dipper is an undergraduate student in her third year of the Interdisciplinary Futures MA programme at Edinburgh Futures Institute, University of Edinburgh. She is currently studying at Leiden University for her third year abroad.*

*Sora Choo is an undergraduate student in her third year of the Interdisciplinary Futures MA programme at Edinburgh Futures Institute, University of Edinburgh. She is currently studying at National University of Singapore for her third year abroad.*

*Jenny Scoles is a Lecturer in Academic Development at the University of Edinburgh.*