

Teaching Leadership as Interdisciplinary

Creating Space for Creativity and Complexity in Higher Education

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Today's Discussion

1. *Leadership in Action: Overview and Ongoing Redevelopment*

2. Interdisciplinarity by Design:

- Leadership as a 'Travelling Concept'
- The Importance of a Strong Narrative Voice
- Student-informed Perspectives

3. *How interdisciplinary is it?*



LEADERSHIP IN ACTION



- First launched in 2005 to give students an introduction to leadership theory
- Now fully online and delivered to around 450 UGs each year.

- Explores contemporary challenges through three questions: How change happens, who drives it, and what this means for leadership practice.
- Features perspectives from leaders across public, private, and voluntary sectors, alongside UK and international academics.

What is Leadership?

e.g Philosophy: I believe Leadership is...

Post

Geography: Leadership is an ability that enables people work together without arguments, and it can foster quicker integration of a team. Each person has strengths, and good leadership can boost efficiency, and thus deliver excellent results.

Mathematics: Leadership is the ability of an individual to inspire, motivate and guide others towards a common objective. It allows for greater collaboration and teamwork, combining the strengths of different individuals so that common objectives can be reached more efficiently and effectively.

Accounting: Leadership is an ability to organise a group of accountants work together as a entity.

Management: leadership is the ability to influence, motivate and guide people; as a result, organisational goals can be achieved effectively.

Instructions

Drag and drop to see if you can match the 'leader' to a particular perspective on leadership.



This person is a leader because of WHO they are / because of their personality

This person is a leader because of WHAT they have achieved / their results

This person is a leader because of WHERE they operate / their position

This person is a leader because of WHY they lead / their purpose

This person is a leader because of HOW they get things done / their process

Module 3: Leadership in a Complex World

38% COMPLETE

- 3.1 Introduction
- 3.2 Leadership in a VUCA world
- 3.3 Leadership & Creativity
- 3.4 Leadership in a Globalised world
- 3.5 Inclusive Leadership
- 3.6 Conclusions
- 3.7 Module 3 and you

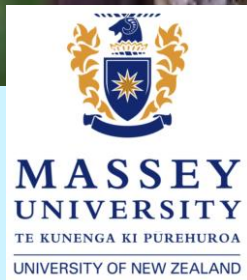
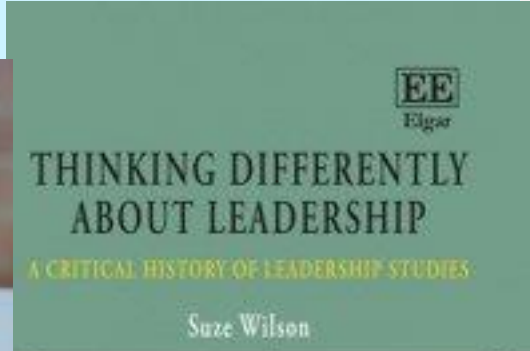


Innovation and risk

[Video not loading? View on the Video Portal](#) | [Download transcript](#)

Interactive Content

Input from Leading Academics



Input from Business and Charity



**INCREDIBLE
EDIBLE
NETWORK**



RECLAIM

WORKING CLASS YOUNG PEOPLE BEING SEEN,
BEING HEARD AND LEADING CHANGE



GRAPHENE

Big Change.

Street giving doesn't work. Change the way you give.



**ELLEN MACARTHUR
FOUNDATION**



Save the Children

Redeveloping the Unit

- Lightly redeveloped in 2022 (updated case studies, new contributors).
- Current redevelopment rethinks how to embed interdisciplinarity in teaching and learning.
- Positions leadership theory as a lens across disciplines.

Guiding question:

How can leadership education be truly interdisciplinary while fostering critical and creative thinking?

Principle #1: 'Leadership' as a traveling concept

From applying leadership to different contexts to understanding leadership as a concept that is continually reinterpreted across them.

Current version



1. Introduction to leadership theory
2. Theories and models
3. Leadership in a complex world
4. Leadership & change
5. Leadership, politics & the media
6. Leadership and climate change
7. Leadership and civil activism
8. Leadership & homelessness
9. Leadership & conflict response
10. Leadership & responsibility

Proposed new version



1. What is leadership?

Leadership is a process
Framing and solving problems
Leadership and Interdisciplinarity

2. Who are leaders?

Theories and models
Limitations of theory and models
Cultural differences and global perspectives

3. Leadership and creativity

Leading in a complex world
Creative and divergent thinking
Preparation for seminar on creativity

4. Leadership and change

Leading through change
Making change happen
Leadership and risk-taking

5. Leadership and trust

Leading in the post-truth world
National leadership
Leadership and authenticity

6. Leadership and language

Every conversation is a negotiation
Biases and miscommunication
Preparation for seminar on communication


7. Leadership and responsibility

Responsibility as accountability
Leadership and ethical duties
Our responsibility as citizens

8. Leadership and crisis

Crisis preparedness
Crisis response
Lessons learned

Principle #2: The importance of a strong narrative voice

- Coherent narration that links ideas across modules
 - A clear and engaging learner journey
 - More direct address to students to strengthen sense of community
 - Less dense text with shorter paragraphs and increased use of visuals
- 

Principle #3: Student-informed perspectives

New Video Content



New Assessments

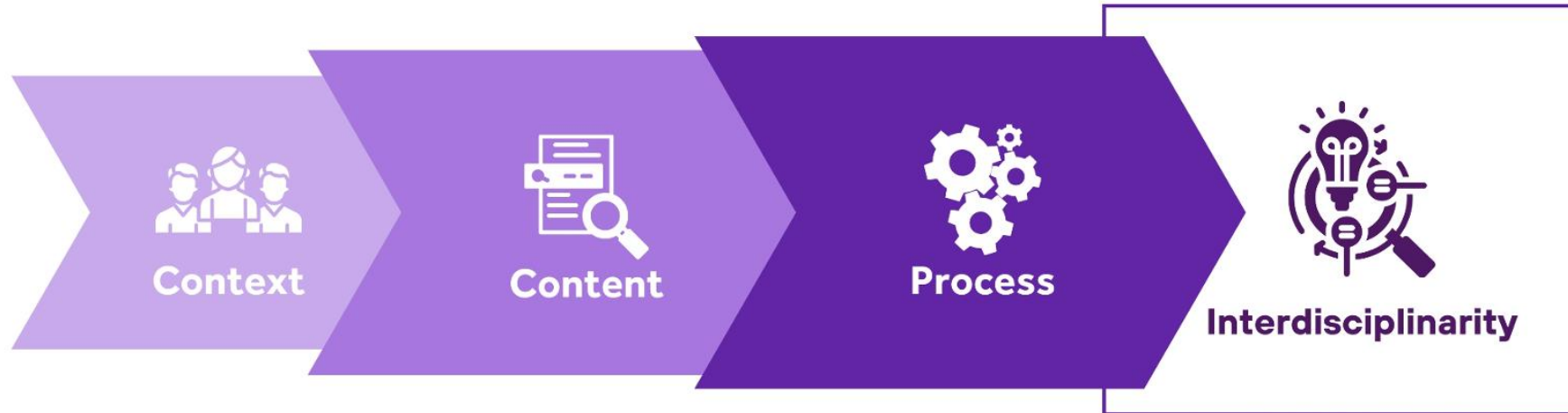
Focus on **authentic, real-world assessments** that are:

- More engaging and interdisciplinary
- More resilient to AI misuse

Possible formats:

- Fieldwork
- Industry partnered type projects
- Reflective piece (e.g. supporting students to become reflective practitioners of leadership)

Framing interdisciplinary learning



How diverse is your student cohort? Ensure your course is designed to attract learners from a wide range of disciplinary backgrounds.

How is your topic explored across disciplines? Highlight its relevance to multiple fields so students can connect it to their own studies.

Do students actively build interdisciplinary understanding? Include collaborative elements such as workshops, discussions, and varied assessments.

Interdisciplinary by Process: some examples

Interactive: Mix and Match	
Student definition of leadership	Student disciplinary background
'Leadership drives innovation and collaboration, enabling the development and application of advanced materials to address real-world problems.'	Materials Science
'Leadership refers to the ability of individuals or organisations to influence trends, shape consumer preferences, inspire innovation, and drive business success within a highly competitive and rapidly changing market.'	Fashion Industry
'Leadership involves guiding teams towards sustainable goals by applying scientific evidence, fostering collaboration, and championing solutions that balance ecological and human needs.'	Environmental Science
'Leadership is about inspiration, care, responsibility, and decision-making.'	Education
'Leadership means using communication and digital platforms to inspire, connect, and influence others positively, helping to create social change and collaboration in online and offline communities.'	Digital Media, Culture and Society



Freeform

Can you provide an example of leadership that failed because it relied on a single disciplinary perspective?

How do you think your studies shape your understanding of leadership?

TO BE FILMED

Conclusion

- Leadership is a highly versatile concept that lends itself naturally to interdisciplinary exploration.
- While still a work in progress, it presents a valuable opportunity to further embed interdisciplinary approaches into learning materials, offering a learning curve for other UCIL units as well.
- Ultimately, it is the student cohort and their collective voice that have the power to make the course genuinely boundary-crossing



Thank you!

Any questions?