

Title: **Collaboration and the Role of Educational Developers in Building Interdisciplinary UG Curricula**

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Session Learning Outcomes

By the end of this session, delegates will be able to:

- Identify the key factors and debates in interdisciplinary curriculum design
- Explain the major hindrances to interdisciplinary development within and across subjects
- Examine the role of Educational Developer role in helping develop interdisciplinary curricula

Session Outline

The success and failure, laughter and tears, of lecturers collaborating to build interdisciplinary courses together is a widely publicised topic (Rowland 2006; Newell 2008; Thompson-Klein 2010). But much less talked about is the active role of Educational Developers in this process. Nevertheless, when large scale interdisciplinarity is undertaken, especially across a full university curriculum, it is often Educational Developers who are tasked to coordinate collaborations across programmes, School and Faculties (Morrison 2014).

Drawing on both the wider literature on interdisciplinary curriculum design, and our recent experiences facilitating institution-wide interdisciplinary modules for all first year undergraduates, this session will discuss how the role of Educational Developers differs from that of subject lecturers or School/Faculty facilitators in developing interdisciplinary collaborations. We will address both the strengths of being the 'outsider' and the weakness of the same, specifically when negotiating different staff understandings of what interdisciplinarity even is, its value to students, and how it is seen to fit into the curriculum (if at all).

We will look at several key hindrances that emerged. First, we will address staff concerns about meeting professional accreditation requirements, and how this challenge might be met by Educational Developers. Against this backdrop we will consider the unique role of Educational Developers as translators, how they are required to build sometimes unfeasible collaborations across academic languages. Drawing on our experiences we will provide evidence-based guidance to support peers foster productive collaborations in their own institutions.

Session Activities and Approximate Timings

The outline of the workshop is as follows;

10 minutes introducing interdisciplinarity in HE and setting the scene

10 minutes examining collaboration through the lens of interdisciplinarity and educational development practice

15 group activity working through 'real life' scenarios

10 minutes feedback and closing comments

Possible questions:

- What hurdles have you encountered in facilitating interdisciplinary collaboration? How have you resolved them?
- To what extent do you think Educational Developers should be involved in the actual content interdisciplinary modules, or should our role stop at facilitating collaboration?
- What problems and solutions do you see in negotiating collaboration across different disciplinary assessment structures?

References

Morrison, David. 2014. "The Underdetermination of Interdisciplinarity: Theory and Curriculum Design in Undergraduate Higher Education." University of Glasgow.

Newell, William. 2008. "The Intertwined History of Interdisciplinary Undergraduate Education and the Association for Integrative Studies: An Insider's View." *Issues in Integrative Studies* 26: 1–59.

Rowland, Stephen. 2006. *The Enquiring University Compliance and Contestation in Higher Education*. Maidenhead: Open University Press.

Thompson-Klein, Julie. 2010. *Creating Interdisciplinary Campus Cultures: A Model Ofr Strength and Sustainability*. San Francisco, Calif.: Jossey-Bass Publishers.