Interdisciplinarity in Learning and Teaching Policy

**Purpose:** To foster and promote the practice of interdisciplinarity in learning and teaching at Murdoch University.

**Audience:** Staff and students

**Supporting Procedures:** There are no supporting procedures

**Contact Officer:** Secretary to Academic Council  **Phone:** 9360 6839

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**Preamble:**

Murdoch University has always been committed to interdisciplinarity. Interdisciplinarity is embedded within academic offerings and is supported and promoted throughout the institution.

Murdoch has as one of its goals to provide all graduates with an awareness of other disciplines through interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary approaches. The approved set of Graduate Attributes supports this goal by listing interdisciplinarity as one of the 9 key attributes students should develop and/or be exposed to.

**Principles:**

1. Interdisciplinarity is recognised as a fundamental, distinguishing and desirable characteristic of learning and teaching at Murdoch University so that it can continue to educate students to live and work in the complex world of tomorrow.

2. The University wishes to foster and promote interdisciplinarity in learning and teaching through planning, policy formulation and course and unit development.

3. The opportunity to develop an interdisciplinary perspective should be available to all students as part of their undergraduate education through the provision of flexibility in course structures and either through courses of study that are interdisciplinary in orientation and/or through individual units within disciplines.

**Policy:**

**Academic Planning and Management**

1. All Murdoch University students should experience interdisciplinarity at some stage in their study. Faculties and Schools can encourage and support this by:

   - Contributing to the coordination and teaching of Foundation Units;
   - Providing and promoting joint degrees;
   - Encouraging double degrees;
   - Encouraging double majors;
   - Encouraging students to undertake a minor or minors from a different discipline;
   - Encouraging students in highly prescribed courses to choose electives from another discipline; and
   - Offering units and opportunities (such as capstone units, work integrated learning, and interdisciplinary units) designed specifically to help students
undertaking multidisciplinary programs to integrate their learning across disciplines.

2. That the offering and promotion of multidisciplinarity through joint degrees, arising through collaboration between different Schools and Faculties, be encouraged by:

(i) Faculties agreeing on a single administrative AOU (or “home” school), but specifying the percentage split of course ownership, and with active collaboration and consultation between contributing Schools/Faculties undertaken by the Academic Chair.

(ii) Identified courses that are shared by two Schools or Faculties rotating the School/Faculty that provides the Academic Chair each two or three years.

(iii) There be specific requirements for inter-school communication in cases where a School offers courses that contain more than 25% of core units from another School. If there is one such course, the membership of the “home” School Board should include a member of academic staff from that other School, appointed by the School Dean. If there are two or more such courses from different Schools, the membership of the School Committee should include two members of academic staff from two different Schools, appointed by each School Dean. This is regardless of whether these Schools are within the same Faculty or from separate Faculties.

(iv) Ensuring that any semester of offering or timetabling issues for joint degrees are actively addressed by allowing a range of enrolment options.

Learning and Teaching

3. That Foundation Units be maintained as a fundamental introduction for students to the concept of Interdisciplinarity (and disciplinarity) at Murdoch University through cross-Faculty coordination and teaching and a content focus on interdisciplinary themes, problems, questions or issues that align with Murdoch’s strategic initiatives.

4. That Foundation units specifically examine the success of interdisciplinary teaching and learning through regular evaluative mechanisms and that these be examined as part of future Foundation Unit Reviews.

5. That the University continue to foster an interdisciplinary perspective in learning and teaching through:

(i) the Graduate Attributes continuing to include interdisciplinarity;

(ii) the Graduate Attribute process collect data on the extent of coverage of interdisciplinarity in undergraduate teaching across the University;

(iii) development activities that enhance an understanding of, and teaching for, interdisciplinarity;

(iv) learning and teaching resources that enhance understanding of, and teaching for, interdisciplinarity; and

(v) systematic integrating processes that assist interdisciplinary and double degree and double major students to maximise and integrate their learning across disciplines.

Supporting Procedures:
There are no supporting procedures.
Supporting Guidelines:
There are no supporting guidelines.

Supporting Standards:
There are no supporting standards.

Definitions:
These definitions have been copied from the “Dictionary of Terms”. Please refer to the “Dictionary of Terms” in Policy and Procedure Manager™ to ensure you are referring to the latest version.

Discipline
A discipline is a specific body of knowledge. Each discipline is a culture in its own right with its own discourse - its own language and vocabulary, and its own methodology for choosing, analyzing, critiquing, interpreting, presenting and using knowledge. (Marshall & Rowland, 2006:40)

Disciplines are identified by Field of Education classifications determined by the Australian Bureau of Statistics.

Interdisciplinarity
Interdisciplinarity ‘is a process of answering a question, solving a problem, or addressing a topic that is too broad or complex to be dealt with adequately by a single discipline and draws on disciplinary perspectives and integrates their insights to produce a more comprehensive understanding or cognitive advancement’. (Repko, 2008: 12).

Multidisciplinarity
Multidisciplinarity refers to the simple juxtaposition of two or more disciplines. ...Here the relationship between the disciplines is merely one of proximity; there is no real integration between them. By contrast, ... interdisciplinarity is always transformative in some way, producing new forms of knowledge in its engagement with discreet disciplines. (Moran, 2002, 16).

Cross disciplinarity
...to view one discipline from the perspective of another’ (Klein, 1990: 55).

Transdisciplinarity
Transdisciplinarity is “the application of theories, concepts, or methods across disciplines with the intent of developing an overarching synthesis.” (Lattuca, 2001: 83).

Related Documents:
There are no related documents.
References: [Documents accessed when developing/reviewing the policy, including web link]


Chettiparamb, A. (2007). Interdisciplinarity: A literature review. The Interdisciplinary teaching and learning group, Subject Centre for Languages, Linguistics and Area Studies, School of Humanities, University of Southampton. http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/ourwork/networks/itlg


Approval and Implementation:

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