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Interdisciplinary Research in Practice

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Key Elements

- Designed by students
- All UG levels – 1, 2, Final Year
- Different learning outcomes
- Students work together as equals
- Supported by Interdisciplinary PhD student
- Theme: Social Justice



Structure

- 10-12 Lectures by academic staff from across the university
- Asked to present their approach to research
- Grounded in real research experience
- Students then have time to ask questions or critique the methods – encouraged by speakers



Some Methods this year

- Archive Research – Tom Clark - Sociology
- Corpus Linguistics – Seth Mehl - English
- Scientific/Hypothesis – Alistair Warren – Biomedical Sciences
- Observational/Practice – Bridie Moore – Theatre
- Laboratory/Objective – Nicola Buckland - Psychology



Assessment

- Students must use two methods on a research topic of their choice – we have had to require this
- Portfolio of tasks throughout the module – formally unassessed by forms a Report of 30%
- Essay of 1500-2000 words on their research
- Symposium before the essay submission to present their unfinished work 5-10 minute presentations



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Student Feedback

- Positive
- Critical
- Would recommend it to friends
- Still issues in fitting it into curriculum
- Allow for HEAR recognition



Define Interdisciplinary study

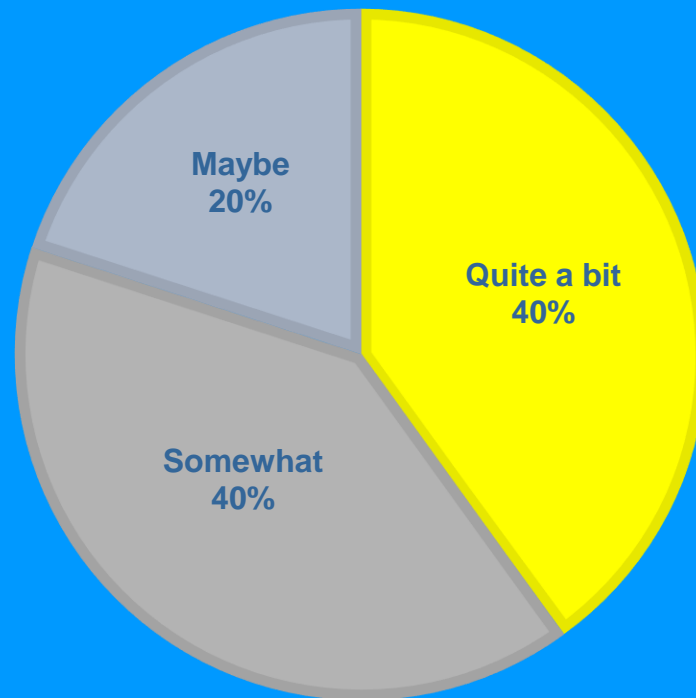
- I would be inclined to follow Repko's definition that interdisciplinary study draws on the discipline's with the aim of integrating their insights for fully comprehensive results.
- A course of study that draws from many varied disciplines; finding commonalities between them; and differences; providing a more holistic research approach.
- Research that uses methods from different disciplines or subjects.



Do you think interdisciplinary study has helped you to understand YOUR OWN subject better?

IMPACT

■ Quite a bit ■ Somewhat ■ Maybe ■ Not much ■ None



None
0%

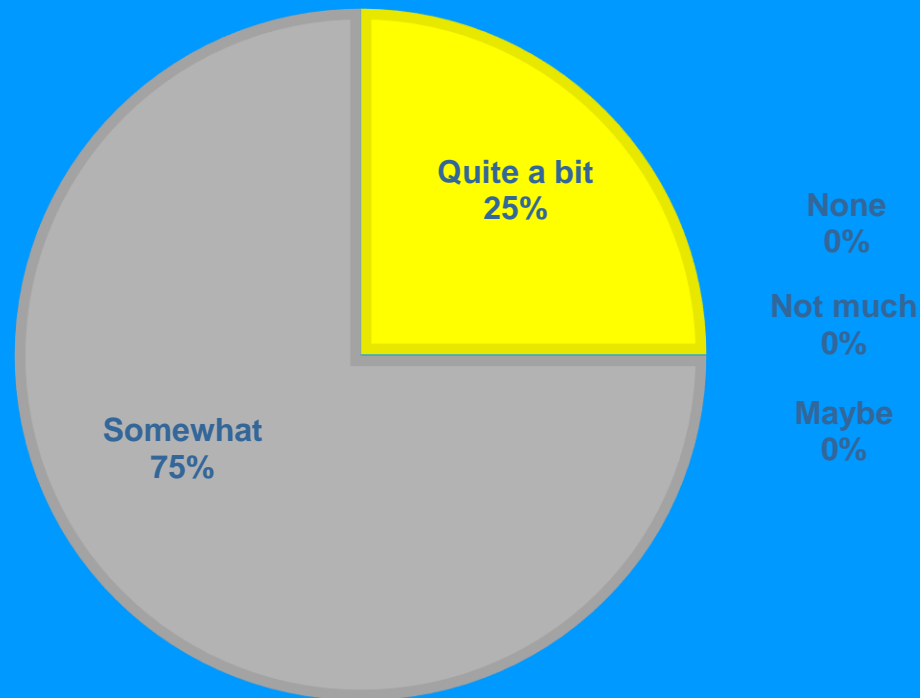
Not much
0%



Do you think interdisciplinary study has helped you to understand ANOTHER subject better?

IMPACT

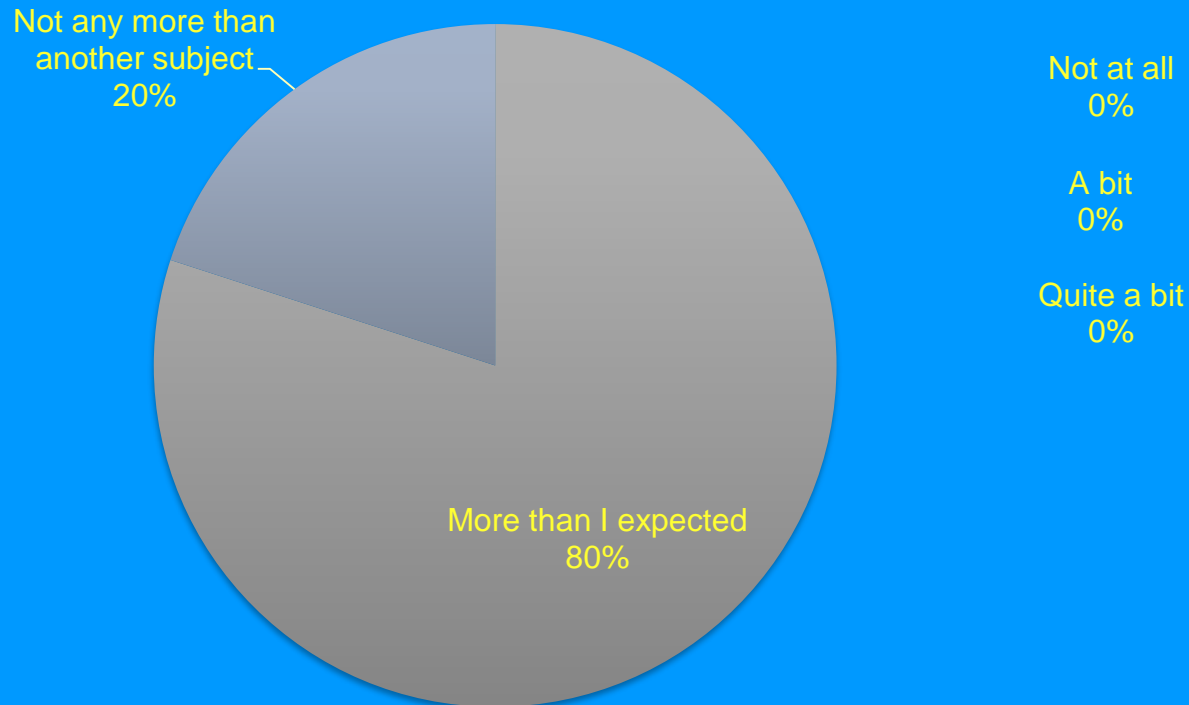
■ Quite a bit ■ Somewhat ■ Maybe ■ Not much ■ None





Does interdisciplinarity help to develop learning skills?

Impact

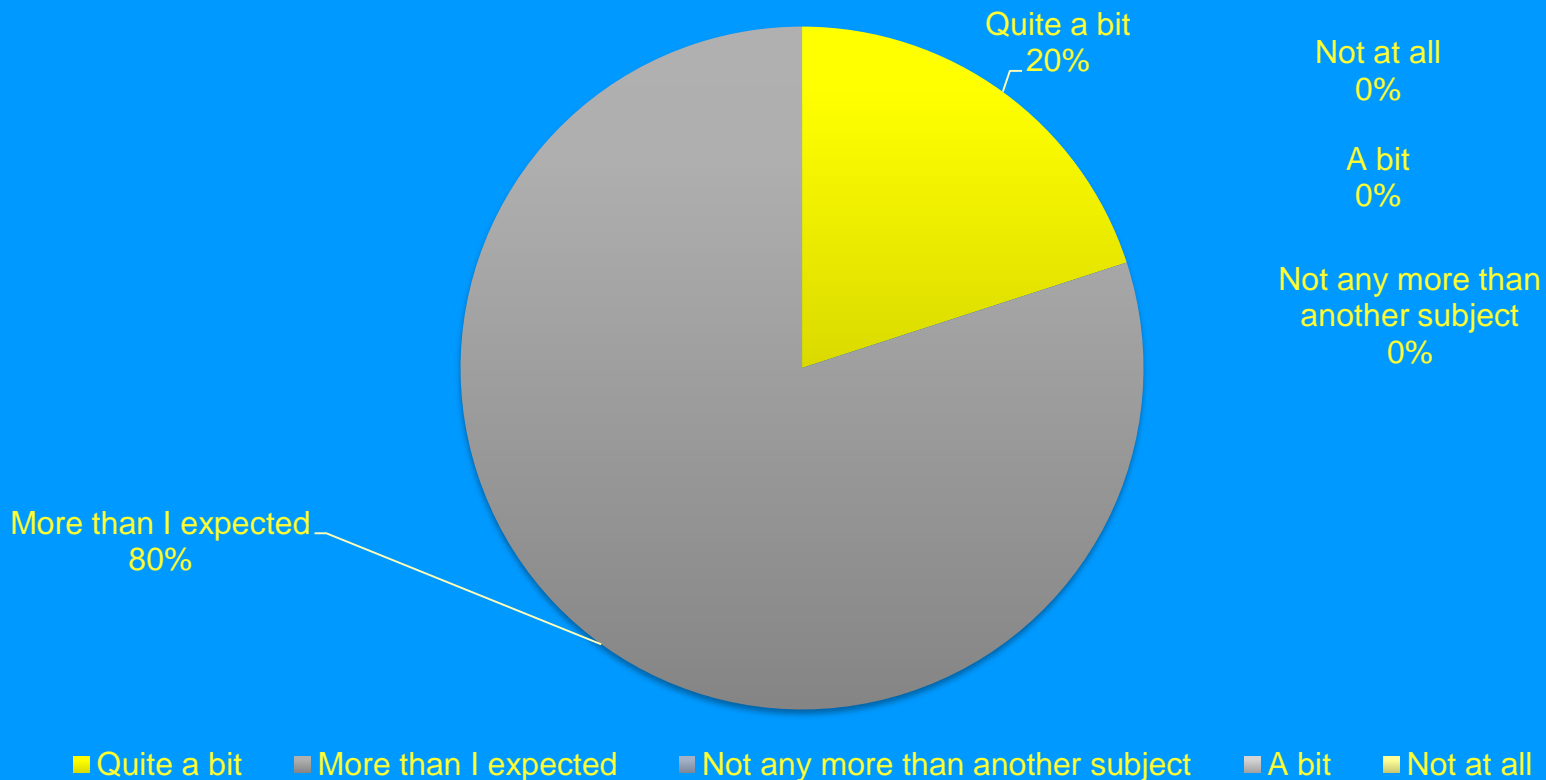


■ Quite a bit ■ More than I expected ■ Not any more than another subject ■ A bit ■ Not at all



Does interdisciplinarity help to develop general knowledge?

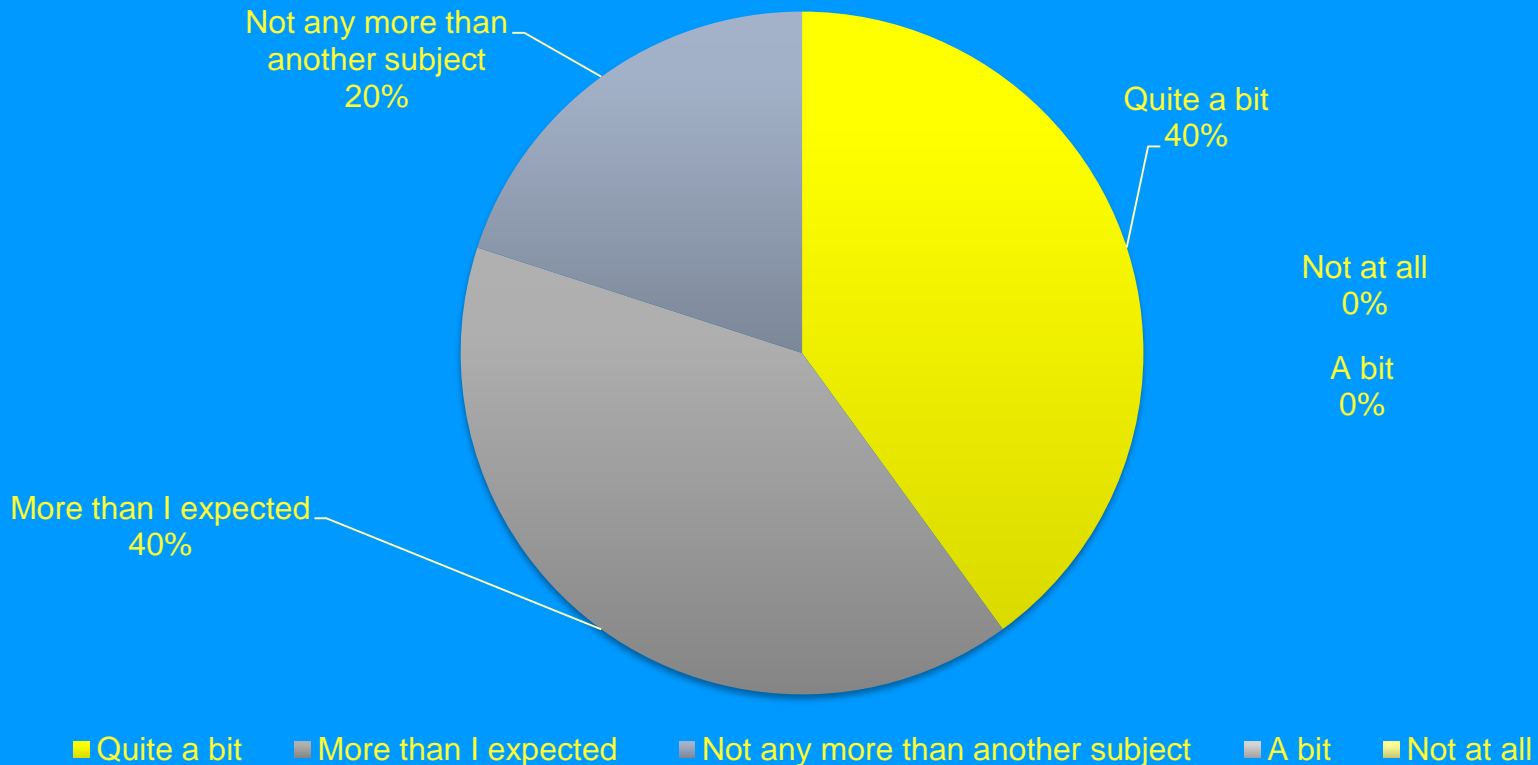
Impact





Does interdisciplinarity help to develop deeper understanding?

Impact





Other comments

- I was obliged to figure out what methodology meant to my own subject area
- As well as academically, the opportunity to present in public, run seminars and engage in forms of writing, of which I had little experience, contributed to my sense of confidence.



When?

- Mix between Level 1 and Level 2
- “I think that starting in the first year with a core module would be ideal and then continuing to develop that throughout the other years within faculties would be really beneficial.”
- “Year 1 students would probably not yet have sufficient knowledge of their own subject area to be able to get the most out of the module - especially as there was no content actually addressing our own disciplinary areas, or indicating resources to do so...”



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Student Attainment

Was there any improvement in student attainment levels after taking the interdisciplinary module?

Could we find an impact on academic performance?



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Student Attainment

N = 13

Four cohorts of students

No Final Year students

Study Abroad Students



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Student Attainment – Final Year

	Year 1	Year 2	Final Year	Module Attainment
Student 1	47.7	46	50.8	42
Student 2	54.8	54	53.8	40
Student 3	65.8	64.8	64.7	76
Student 4	63.8	66.7	69.2	59
Student 5	61.7	65.5	67	59



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Student Attainment – Final Year

	Year 1	Year 2	Final Year	Module Attainment
Student 1	66.8	71.2	69.5	75
Student 2	75.5	74.3	69	77
Student 3	60.5	62	67.2	60
Student 4	62.2	69.5	75.7	74



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Student Attainment – Year 2

	Year 1	Year 2	Module Attainment
Student 1	62.5	62.7	62
Student 2	65.3	65	64
Student 3	62.8	60.7	61
Student 4	52.3	51.5	59



Student Attainment

- No clear improvement or link to better outcomes
- No clear link between module attainment and overall outcome
- Will extend data set on this year's cohort
- Student feedback still positive
- Longer term benefits?



References

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To
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And
Understand.