

**Challenging Futures:  
Transformational curricula for interdisciplinary learning  
at Scottish HEIs**

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# Curriculum Transformation



# Aims

- To demonstrate the ways in which strategic innovation and support have facilitated programmatic change.
- To offer practical advice on obtaining institutional support and strategic investment.
- To show the synergy between institutional level strategy and innovative learning and teaching practices.
- To demonstrate broader context of large-scale institutional change.

# Transformation Projects



Institution	Model	Focus	Delivery	Mechanism
Hong Kong University (HKU)	Common Core	Interdisciplinary	Imbedded in curricula	Institutional response to Government policy change (2012)
Singapore Institute of Technology (SIT)	Competency modules	Skills	Imbedded in curricula	Required by Government policy change (2022)
Halmstad University	Common Core	Interdisciplinary	Imbedded in curricula	Institutional strategy
North-eastern University	Graduate Attributes (GA) led	Interdisciplinary and skills	Imbedded in curricula (General Education modules)	Liberal arts framework
Imperial College London	i-Imperial	Interdisciplinary and skills	Voluntary participation, cocurricular	Institutional strategy
University of Strathclyde	Vertically Integrated Projects (VIP)	Interdisciplinary and skills	Voluntary participation, cocurricular	Institutional strategy
University of Bath	VIP	Interdisciplinary and skills	Voluntary participation, cocurricular	Institutional strategy
University of Edinburgh	Transformation Project Futures Institute	Interdisciplinary and skills Curriculum alignment to GA	Imbedded in curricula	Institutional strategy Curriculum archetypes
University of St Andrews	VIP	Interdisciplinary and skills	Voluntary participation, cocurricular	Institutional strategy
Georgia Institute of Technology	VIP	Interdisciplinary and skills	Voluntary participation, curricula	Institutional strategy

# HKU : Common Core

## **Mission**

- The mission of the Common Core Program is to support the mission and vision of HKUST by providing a broad and well-rounded education to its undergraduates that nurtures them to be responsible, ethical and compassionate citizens with the aspiration and competency to excel in their endeavors.

## **Goals**

- The Common Core Program strives to provide undergraduate students with a well-rounded quality education that broadens their horizons, inspires and ignites their passion for learning and empowers them for lifelong pursuit of excellence. Specifically, the goals of the Common Core Program are:
  - Broadening horizons
  - A passion for learning
  - A lifelong pursuit of excellence

# Vertically Integrated Projects : VIP

- The Vertically Integrated Projects (VIP) Program is a transformative approach to enhancing higher education by engaging undergraduate and graduate students in ambitious, long-term, large-scale, multidisciplinary project teams that are led by faculty.
- In VIP, teams of undergraduate students – from various years, disciplines and backgrounds – work with faculty and graduate students in their areas of scholarship and exploration.
  - Creates long-term experiences with the innovation process
  - Cultivates leadership & mentoring
  - Supports faculty scholarship and exploration

# Relating strategy & Implementation

Central institutional support partnered with collegiate buy-in and mutual investment

- Establish space in the curriculum for the approach
- Agree on the multidisciplinary criteria and ILOS
- Scrutinise applications for courses in line with the criteria and ILOS
- Establish a boards of studies, regulatory and quality assurance practices
- Work across colleges and faculties to map and make sense of the approaches for students and staff





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# Interdisciplinary Futures





# Interdisciplinary Futures

- - **Challenge-led learning** designed at programme level, placing complex questions about sustainability, inequality, conflict, and global health at the centre of the learning experience.
- - An emphasis on **team work and collaboration**, with the tutor often taking on the role of a coach, facilitating self-directed learning and research.
- - A focus on competency in a wide range of **research methods** including data analysis and collection, cultural analysis and creative practice.
- - Space for **reflections on interdisciplinary practice**, including knowledge practices and personal wellbeing.
- - Opportunities to work with and respond to briefs set by **external partners**.
- - **No lectures, no exams**.
- - A **pass/fail model** for all first and second year (or pre-honours) courses, allowing students space to experiment and build the skills and abilities that will be assessed in their final years.

# Interdisciplinary Futures





# Interdisciplinary Futures



- **A recalibration of disciplinary learning**
- **An agile, critical thinking skillset** – negotiation between depth and breadth
- **Space for interdisciplinary knowledge exchange** and approaches to real world problems

# Advice

- Place courses in the context of institutional strategy
- Discuss with strategy staff and senior colleagues in schools and colleges
- What enablers and changes are required to facilitate the offering of your course or programme?
- Locate yourself in strategy
- Be part of the scoping and transformational discussions – be the empirical case study

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