

An Analysis of Curricula in Interdisciplinary Bachelor's Programmes at the University of Oslo

Center for Interdisciplinary Education (INTED), University of Oslo

Report series from students' summer projects

2025



By

Eman Ghazniwal

Kevin Tobias Tannum

Ylva Tordsdatter Halle

Summary

This report investigates how interdisciplinarity is reflected in the curriculum of interdisciplinary bachelor's programmes at the University of Oslo (UiO). The project is motivated by UiO's strategic commitment to interdisciplinarity and the growing need for graduates who can combine knowledge and perspectives from multiple disciplines to address complex societal challenges such as climate change, economic inequality, and technological development.

The purpose of the study is to examine how interdisciplinarity is understood and implemented within three bachelor's programmes that explicitly identify as interdisciplinary, each representing a different faculty at UiO: Philosophy, Politics and Economics (PPE) at the Faculty of Humanities, Development Studies and Sustainability at the Faculty of Social Sciences, and Informatics: Design, Use and Interaction at the Faculty of Mathematics and Natural Sciences. By comparing programmes across faculties, the report seeks to identify both shared approaches and differences in how interdisciplinary education is realized.

The report adopts a broad understanding of interdisciplinary competence as the ability to meaningfully integrate knowledge, methods, and perspectives across disciplinary boundaries. Interdisciplinarity is examined at three levels: the individual, the group, and the system. At the individual level, interdisciplinary competence involves the ability to synthesize knowledge from different fields and develop new perspectives or solutions. At the group level, the focus is on interdisciplinary collaboration, ranging from multidisciplinary cooperation to interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary forms of integration. At the system level, interdisciplinarity concerns the structures and practices that facilitate collaboration across disciplinary and organizational boundaries.

To analyse the programmes, the authors conducted a systematic review of course descriptions and reading lists, supplemented by conversations with programme leaders and course coordinators. A dedicated interdisciplinary checklist was developed as an analytical framework. The checklist examines aspects such as the integration of disciplinary perspectives, interdisciplinary learning outcomes, collaboration between students, assessment practices, the composition of the curriculum, and whether interdisciplinarity itself is explicitly discussed and taught.

The report aims to assess not only whether programmes include content from multiple disciplines, but also whether they actively help students integrate knowledge across those disciplines. Particular attention is given to the extent to which interdisciplinary thinking is embedded in teaching, assessment, group work, and bachelor's thesis requirements.

Overall, the study provides a framework for evaluating interdisciplinarity in higher education and offers insights into how different faculties approach interdisciplinary teaching and learning. By identifying similarities, differences, strengths, and areas for development, the report contributes to ongoing discussions about how universities can better prepare students to engage with complex real-world challenges through interdisciplinary knowledge and collaboration.