

Review of Research Literature on Interdisciplinary Competence

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Summary

This literature review examines how interdisciplinary competencies have been defined and understood in academic research published between 2019 and 2025. Building on Blom et al.'s 2019 paper *Assessment of Interdisciplinary Competencies*, the report investigates whether the academic understanding of interdisciplinary competencies has changed and identifies areas of continuity and development in the literature.

To conduct the review, the authors searched the Oria database using the keyword “interdisciplinary competence.” The search was limited to peer-reviewed articles published between 2019 and 2025 and focused on higher education. From over 600 initial results, a smaller selection of studies was screened and evaluated according to predefined inclusion criteria. Six key articles were then analyzed in depth, with particular attention to how they define, categorize, assess, and discuss interdisciplinary competencies.

The review finds that many of the fundamental ideas identified by Blom et al. remain highly relevant. Across the literature, there is broad agreement that interdisciplinarity involves the integration of disciplinary knowledge, methods, and perspectives in ways that enable deeper understanding or the creation of outcomes that could not be achieved through a single discipline alone. Similarly, several studies emphasize that effective interdisciplinary work requires both a strong grounding in one's own discipline and the ability to engage openly with the perspectives and expertise of others, often described as disciplinary humility.

The literature also demonstrates a continuing recognition of the hierarchical relationships between concepts such as multidisciplinary, interdisciplinary, and transdisciplinary collaboration. These distinctions remain useful for describing different forms and levels of knowledge integration, although their boundaries appear to be becoming less clear.

At the same time, the review identifies several important developments. One notable trend is the growing application of interdisciplinary approaches beyond academia, including public policy, industry, and societal problem-solving. As a result, the distinction between interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary work has become increasingly blurred. Another key shift is a move away from viewing interdisciplinary competence primarily as something to be assessed in educational settings. Instead, recent studies increasingly conceptualize it as a broader combination of skills, attitudes, and collaborative capabilities that enable individuals to participate effectively in diverse teams and address complex real-world challenges.

Overall, the review concludes that while there is still no universally accepted definition of interdisciplinary competence, there is substantial agreement regarding its core features. The main developments since 2019 concern the expanding societal relevance of interdisciplinarity and a growing emphasis on collaboration, adaptability, and interpersonal competencies alongside disciplinary knowledge and integrative thinking.