

# **Categorizing Interdisciplinary Study Programs in Higher Education: A Review of Classification Approaches and Their Application**

Center for Interdisciplinary Education (INTED), University of Oslo

Report series from students' summer projects

2026



By

Lisa Sørdal

Sverre Næsheim Bjørnhaug

## Abstract

This report serves two purposes. First, it examines different perspectives on how interdisciplinarity and interdisciplinary education have been defined in the literature. Understanding these perspectives is important because different definitions imply different approaches to classification. Second, the report reviews classification frameworks and discusses how they may be adapted to the practical task of identifying interdisciplinary study programs at the University of Oslo. Because few scholars provide ready-made classification criteria, attention is given both to existing classification systems and to the challenges involved in operationalizing broader theoretical perspectives.

The report is structured around several categories or discussions identified in the literature. The reason for this is to clarify some of the different perspectives on how to define and classify Interdisciplinary study programs, as there are many quite diverging trends to be found. A recurring theme throughout the literature is that defining interdisciplinarity and classifying interdisciplinary programs are related but distinct tasks. While many authors propose definitions of interdisciplinarity, relatively few provide practical criteria that can be applied directly to program-level classification. Consequently, this report pays particular attention to the relationship between conceptual definitions and operational classification approaches.