

Learning from each other through a Community of Practice



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Overview



WHAT IS A
COMMUNITY OF
PRACTICE?



LEARNING CIRCLES IN
THE UNIVERSITY OF
WARWICK CONTEXT



OUR PROJECTS
SO FAR



BENEFITS &
CHALLENGES



What is a Community of Practice?

“Communities of Practice are groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly.” (Wenger, 2009).

A CoP is a unique combination of 3 elements:

- A **domain** of knowledge
- The **shared practice** that they are developing to be effective in their domain
- A **community of people** who care about the domain

Domain



Practice



Community



Benefits of a Community of Practice

- New perspectives on common interests and challenges
- Creates connections across organisational boundaries
- Capacity for knowledge-development projects
- Capacity to develop new strategic options



Characteristics of a Community of Practice

CoP Characteristics	Interdisciplinary Learning Circle
Big or Small	Around 20 members
Long-lived or Short-lived	Formed in 2018
Co-located or Distributed	Co-located on Warwick campus
Inside or Across Boundaries	Across boundaries but with common interest in interdisciplinarity
Homogeneous or Heterogeneous	Academics, Professional Service Staff, Students
Spontaneous or Intentional	Intentional
Unrecognised or Endorsed	Officially endorsed but not financially supported

Learning Circles in the University of Warwick Context



- [WIHEA](#) (founded in 2015)
- UK's first institutional academy of educators
- Fellows encouraged to join a circle led by a colleague
WIHEA Fellow
- Staff and students collaborate in developing and steering
learning and teaching together
- Influence and enhance institutional practice and policy



Learning Circles in the University of Warwick Context



University's Education Strategy

Interdisciplinarity is one of the four thematic areas

Two Goals

- 1) To sustain and enhance excellence in interdisciplinary teaching and learning culture and practices
- 2) To offer students a wide range of opportunities to engage in interdisciplinary learning both within and outside the curriculum



Cultivating our Community of Practice

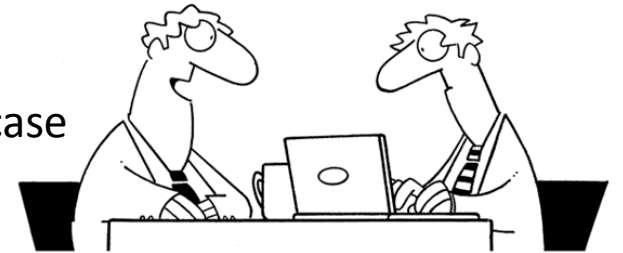
- Recruit new participants: WIHEA Fellows are appointed annually for a 3 year term
- Different levels of participation: Chair, project team, student project officers, new and old members
- Objectives: set each year to give sense of purpose
- Routine: aim to have two or three meetings a term
- Focus on Value: regular funding applications with outcomes group has to deliver



Learning Circle's Initial Project

Three Objectives:

- Undertake a review of institutional interdisciplinary opportunities
- Capture, curate and present the impact of these interdisciplinary activities across Warwick
- Initiate the development of a MyWarwick space to showcase these interdisciplinary opportunities to students in an engaging way



"I have some specific, unknown objectives for you to achieve."

Institutional Review of Interdisciplinarity

- Interviewed key members of staff from 17 departments
- Engaged students via Warwick Secret Challenge events and surveys
- Provided a fuller picture of interdisciplinary activity
- Report offered recommendations for next steps

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INCONSISTENT
TERMINOLOGY



INCONSISTENT
REPORTING



NON-SHARING
ATTITUDE



INSTITUTIONAL
BARRIERS



RESOURCE
CONSTRAINTS



DISCIPLINARY
LANGUAGE/METHODS



LOW RISK
OPPORTUNITIES



INCENTIVES &
CHAMPIONS



OUTSIDE INFLUENCES



STUDENT EXPERIENCE

Development of the Interdisciplinary Hub

- What is interdisciplinarity?
- How to be interdisciplinary?
- Why interdisciplinarity?
- Get Started!
- Case Studies showing impact of interdisciplinary activities

Interdisciplinarity Hub

[What is Interdisciplinarity?](#) | [How to be Interdisciplinarity?](#) | [Why Interdisciplinarity?](#) | [Get Started!](#) | [Share your thoughts](#)



Interdisciplinarity is the combining of methods and insights of two or more academic disciplines into the pursuit of a common task, such as a research project. It is typically characterised by the crossing of 'traditional boundaries' between academic disciplines or schools of thought to address new and emerging issues.

At Warwick every student has an opportunity to engage with Interdisciplinarity, whether that's through an interdisciplinary module, research project, or society activity. There are [so many ways](#) to create a unique learning experience beyond the boundaries of your degree. Check out the [3 steps](#) to get started with Interdisciplinarity. Chances are, you might be doing it already!

What is Interdisciplinarity at Warwick?



Departmental Hubs

- Follow-up project looked at setting up individual department pages
- Departmental page signposts to:
 - Interdisciplinary study opportunities
 - Student research opportunities
 - World at Warwick (global engagement)
 - Warwick Enterprise

☰ Interdisciplinarity Hub

What is Interdisciplinarity? | How to be Interdisciplinarity? | Why Interdisciplinarity? | Get Started! ▾ | Share your thoughts

Interdisciplinarity in History

Interdisciplinarity in History

Modules

Many of our modules have been designed to bridge ideas, concepts, and perspectives to give each History student an interdisciplinary experience whilst studying with us. Take a look at our latest list on [Modules page](#).

There is also an opportunity to take modules outside of History. You can take a [language module](#), explore modules within the Faculty of Arts, or take an [IATL module](#). For more information on accessing these options check out our [Modules and CATS page](#).

Events

Find out more about the latest interdisciplinary events in the department on our [News page](#).

Research opportunities

During your time at History you will be encouraged to push the boundaries of the discipline. We will challenge you to ask questions and support you in finding answers to those questions. There is a number of research opportunities available to all History students: from essays and dissertation, to Student Fellowship Programme and summer research projects. Find out more about departmental and University wide opportunities on [Warwick's Student Research Hub](#) and [History's Student Research page](#).

We also encourage you to take a look at our [departmental research activity page](#) and how diverse and interdisciplinary History's research community and interests are.

Useful contacts

Career Consultant: Millie Tissut

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Academic Support Librarian:

Katherine Waters

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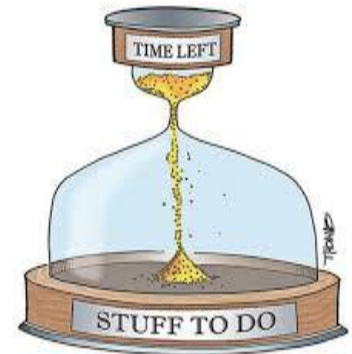
Professor Rebecca Earle, Head of Department

"History has always been interdisciplinary. It was only in the nineteenth century that 'history' as an academic subject began to be seen as separate from other disciplines. At Warwick our approach to historical research embraces politics, literary theory, economics, environmental studies and much more. Insight into the past can be gained from many different sources, and ideas developed in many different disciplines can help us make sense of them. We don't believe in putting up hard borders or fences to separate History from the rich and exciting world that lies outside of our department."

Staff Interdisciplinary Hub

Project objectives:

- Create an online resource for staff
- Disseminate successful interdisciplinary case studies
- Provide guidance on designing interdisciplinarity into modules
- Provide support and training for interdisciplinary teaching
- Create a network of interdisciplinary champions
- End of project July 2021





Learning Circle Challenges

- Remote working
- Excessive workloads due to the ongoing pandemic
- Limited time available for project team to undertake a large project
- Difficult to schedule meetings so everyone can attend.
- Frequent recaps on progress made.

Questions and Answers

Please do let us know how you are approaching similar situations within your organisation.

If you wish to get in touch after the conference:

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Thanks for attending!

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