

Interdisciplinary research and teaching in international business

Teaching and learning conference 2026
Theme: Research-informed teaching and learning

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Interdisciplinary research and teaching in international business

Background:

- **Have you ever said or heard about these in class?**
 - » “Thinking outside the box”;
 - » “Critical thinking”; “Be creative when facing a problem”
- **Have you ever asked**
 - » What is our role as researchers and educators? (Klein, 2006)
 - » How?
- **How can we help students “think outside the box” through interdisciplinary research and teaching in HE?**
 - » Holistic thinking (Klaassen, 2018; Weinberg & Harding, 2004)
 - » Boundary spanning
 - » Knowledge integration (Visscher-Voerman, 2026)

Literature

- **What is interdisciplinary research and teaching?**
- **Little consensus (Applebee et al., 2007); but some key features** (Bear & Skorton, 2019; Holley, 2017; Warkentien et al., 2022)
 - » Thematic-based drawing insights from different disciplines
 - » Integration of disciplines to address a complex problem
- **Implementation and practice**
 - » **Explicit connections across disciplines:** Assumptions, intellectual foundations, focus of analysis (Klein, 2006)
 - » **Team** with complementary insights (Perry & Stewart, 2005)
 - » **Student engagement** through teaching – learning collaborations (Drake & Burns, 2004; Newell, 2013)
- **We need interdisciplinary research and teaching**

Gaps in knowledge and pedagogical practices

- How interdisciplinary research and teaching help student to think outside the box?
- What are the key challenges in curriculum design, teaching delivery and student engagements?
- How to meet strategies set in M2035?

More specifically,

- **How interdisciplinary research enhance teaching in international business (IB)?**
 - » “Frontier topics course in international business”

The context: “Frontier topics in international business”

- **MSc International business & management**
 - » 100 – 108 students worldwide;
 - » About half are from non-business disciplines
- **Some common issues faced by students from non-business disciplines**
 - » Different intellectual foundations and training
 - » Difficult to integrate and pick up in a short-period of time
 - » Gaps between knowledge discussed in class and the changing external environment
- **We introduced “Frontier topics in international business” as a core module**
 - » Piloted with the 2020-21 (online) cohort
 - » Further development of curriculum and assessment

The context: “Frontier topics in international business”

- **Objectives and delivery:**

- » Topic-based module introduce students to debates and frontier issues in business;
- » First part: To introducing key theoretical perspectives in international business;
- » Second part: Theory meets real-world business challenges

- **Intended learning outcomes:**

- » Disciplinary knowledge in business and other fields;
- » Practical skills;
- » Transferrable skills

Implementation

- A modest start, then refinement of ILOs and module delivery
- **The clarifications of ILOs (Brooks et al., 2014) and implications**
 - » Disciplinary knowledge: Remind their disciplinary identities
 - » Practical skills: What can a business course offer to them?
 - » Transferrable skills: How to combine and integrate knowledge?
- To incorporate and match ILOs with each lecture and seminar
- Incremental learning (Hussey & Smith, 2010)

Implementation

- **Module delivery: Integration of different components**
 - » Lectures informed by research expertise of the course team in geopolitics, firm – state relations, sustainable development
 - » Seminars discussions are led by students
- **Roles**
 - » The course coordinator **as knowledge creators and disseminators and facilitators**
 - » Student-led learning, esp. students from non-business disciplines **as our partners**, e.g. students from IR, history and language
 - » **A process of knowledge co-creation and sharing**

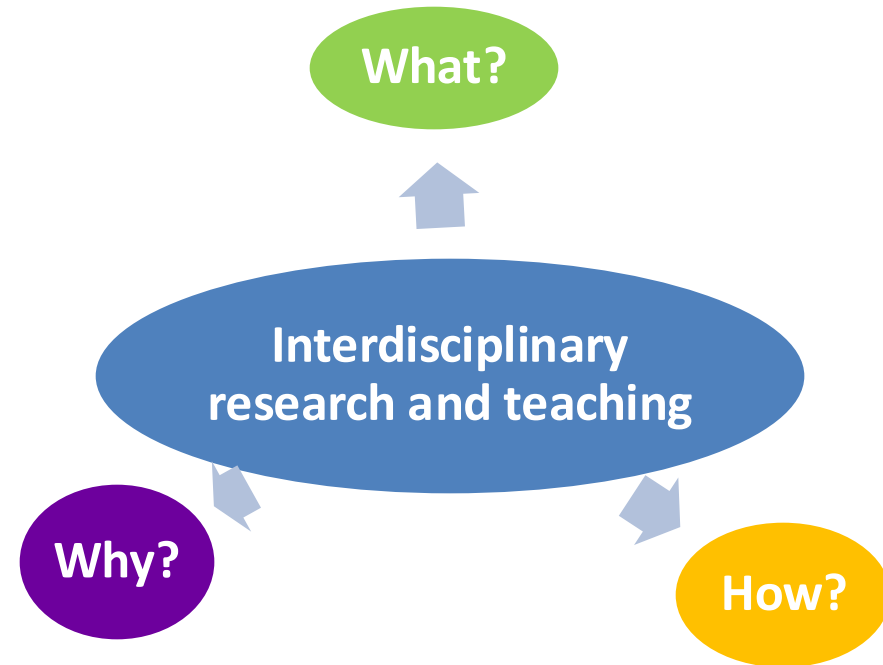
Outcomes

- **Reach**
- **Value:**
 - » Research-informed teaching to introduce students interdisciplinary research to broaden their perspectives
 - » Student-led learning to encourage engagement of students from all backgrounds
- **Impact:**
 - » Short-term: Dissertation topic selection base on knowledge introduced in the course;
 - » Long-term: Student engagement in research and synergies between teaching and research

Key messages

To sum up,

- **Interdisciplinary research can inform teaching in business and other fields**
 - » Curriculum design and delivery
 - » Cutting-edge scholarly topic and debates
- **How about the flip side of the coin?**
 - » What teaching can do for research besides pedagogical development?



Thank you

Q&A