Toolkit: Embedding disciplinary identities in curriculum design

Part of a QAA Collaborative Enhancement Project

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Project Partners: University of Greenwich (lead), Royal Holloway, University of London, University of Lincoln

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1. Introduction to Toolkit and Overview

This resource is an output from a Collaborative Enhancement Project supported and funded by QAA Membership during 2022-23. The project was led by the University of Greenwich in partnership with Royal Holloway, University of London and Lincoln University. You can find out more about this Collaborative Enhancement Project on the QAA Website, Embedding multiple disciplinary affiliation identities in shared modules to enhance curriculum design (qaa.ac.uk).

The focus of the project was an investigation into what we term 'shared modules' to make a distinction between modules studied by students who are enrolled on different programmes and those modules that are taken exclusively by students enrolled on the same degree programme. A literature review, a questionnaire survey of staff and focus groups with students across all three partner institutions; formed a data set which has informed this toolkit. The focus of the toolkit is on encouraging reflection on the challenges, benefits and untapped interdisciplinary potential of shared modules to improve their design and organisational arrangements. This toolkit offers users an opportunity to:

- adopt a structured approach for the design of a new shared module.
- reflect on and evaluate how interdisciplinary and inclusivity are used to embed multiple disciplinary affiliations in the curriculum of a module using a series of prompt questions at key stages of the curriculum design.
- use customised tools to enhance the delivery of a shared module.

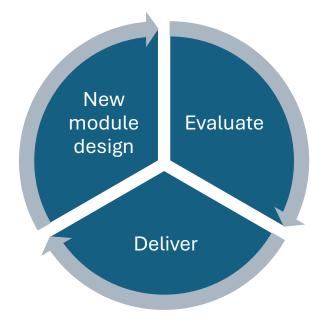
The toolkit can be used at key stages in curriculum design and delivery, represented diagrammatically in three parts – New module design/Evaluate/Deliver.

The new module design tool guides stakeholders participating in developing new degree programmes and new shared modules.

At the evaluation stage, leaders of existing shared modules can use the reflective tool to review modules and diagnose challenges and opportunities. They can then set priorities for enhancements that will embed multiple disciplinary identities and affiliations.

The deliver phase focuses on actions module teams can take in their module documentation and in the classroom, to raise awareness of disciplinary identities in a shared module and foster interaction between students with different disciplinary affiliations and between tutors and students.

A Multistage Shared Module Toolkit



In this toolkit, you will find tools for each of the key stages outlined above. The tool at the **new module design stage** is based on the typology developed in the literature review. Its purpose is to act as a guide when considering whether to use shared modules in a programme and/or when designing a new shared module. The reflective tool designed for the **evaluate stage** is to be used with existing shared modules. It incorporates our research findings that shared modules can be enhanced by improving their transparency, interdisciplinarity, inclusivity and coordination of administrative arrangements.

The **deliver stage** is different from the other stages in that it offers a suite of example tools. We see the deliver stage as an ongoing opportunity to curate tools shared by academics and establish a community of practice that is committed to supporting the enhancement and delivery shared modules

The toolkit is not meant to dictate practice but offers general principles for improving shared modules in different contexts and for a range of parties. The tools can be used by one person in a role or by teams. We hope the tools will inspire an intentional and systematic approach to shared modules that optimises the benefits they can bring through resource sharing and interdisciplinarity.

2. Stage 1 - New Shared Module Design Tool

2.1 About this tool

Purpose: To support academics and quality assurance professionals to determine whether to include a shared module in a new programme and how to design new shared modules.

Type: Facilitated workshop plan including workshop pre-activity

User Focus: Programme leaders, module leaders, academic developers, quality assurance professionals

Description:

This two-part tool uses a shared module typology to frame initial design considerations for developing new shared modules. The tool includes both a pre-workshop activity and a plan and template for a facilitated workshop. With the help of a flowchart (section 2,3), the first part of the tool supports decision-making by allowing users to consider the motivations for and expected benefits of using a shared module. Part 1 guides users to choose an appropriate type of shared module to design based on the expected benefits.

The second part offers stakeholders in the module the opportunity, in a workshop setting, to work through a Design Considerations Template (section 2.4). There is a different template for each type of module, with prompt questions for use in module design. Working through the questions encourages users to consider and plan for how to overcome, at the design stage, the typical challenges of shared modules identified in the project.

Recommendations:

This tool is best used at the earliest possible stage to surface potential challenges to the design of shared modules.

The more members of a programme and module team involved, including administrative staff where appropriate, the more likely it is that common issues can be overcome.

2.2 Guidance notes for workshop facilitators

Workshop Intended outcomes:

• To support the selection of an appropriate type of shared module based on the expected benefits (pre-workshop exercise).

- To identify probable challenges expected in the design of a shared module.
- To anticipate potential challenges in the delivery of a shared module.

Part 1 Workshop pre-activity for programme/module leaders – (use Shared Modules Motivation Form)

Academic colleagues intending to design Shared Modules will complete a form which asks prompt questions about their motivations. These motivations are aligned to appropriate types of shared modules and a recommended type is provided. The outcome of using the typology in Part 1 is that the module team will choose a type of shared module to design.

Part 2- Facilitated workshop using a Design Considerations template [interdisciplinary module example]

For workshops organised by academic developers and quality assurance colleagues, this tool should be used in a setting which brings together all relevant stakeholders. This would likely include the module leader, programme leader and the module teaching team (including any colleagues from different disciplines or schools if identified). As a group, the module team will be guided to work through the relevant prompt question template for their chosen shared module type (outcome of part 1).

As a group, the module team will be guided to work through the relevant prompt questions in the design considerations template for their chosen shared module type.

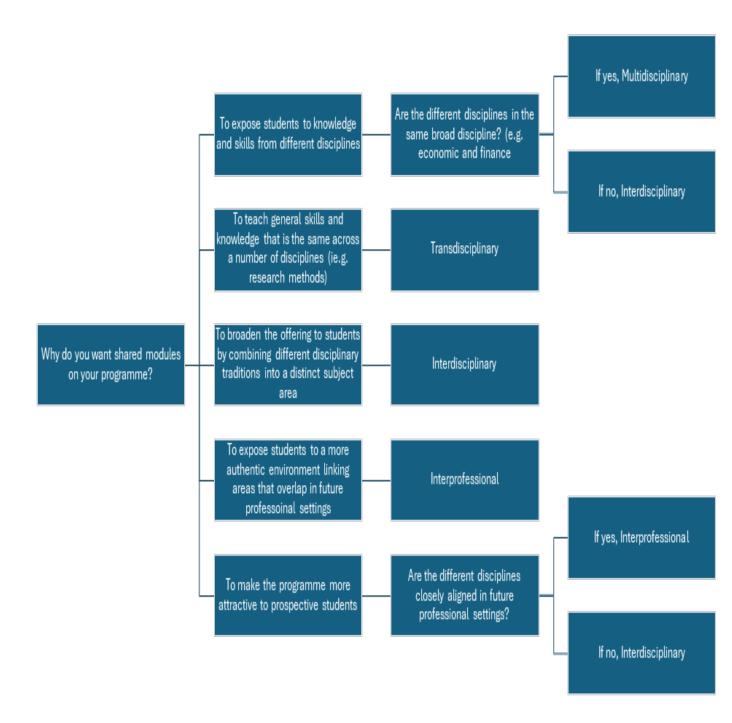
The design considerations template has two sections:

- Section 1 unpacks the module teams' expectations about the module [20 minutes]
- Section 2 prompts them to address potential design challenges [30 minutes]

We recommend printing the template on at least A1 size to work on in groups, you may wish to use post-it notes to answer the questions.

Following the workshop, the relevant process to propose the module should be followed by the module/programme leader in partnership with quality colleagues. It is paramount the approaches to the relevant challenges explored in the design considerations workshop are represented at this stage.

2.3 Shared Modules Motivations Form (for use in Part 1)



2.4 Design considerations template (for use in part 2)

Module name:		
Shared module type: Interdis disciplines are brought toget! Section 1: Expectations [20	ner in a new module	distinctly separate
What do you want to achieve from this shared module?	 Consider The disciplinary identity of students Efficiencies Marketability 	
What do you expect students to get out of your shared interdisciplinary module?	Consider Employability and skills Interpersonal/social Knowledge	
Section 2: Challenges [30 mir	nutes]	
Do you have the right disciplinary expertise?	Consider	

	 How you can build networks, what contacts do you have? What do other similar modules offer at other universities? 	
	How does assessment differ in disciplinary traditions?	
How can you ensure the module balances both disciplines appropriately?	 Consider How you can ensure constructive alignment with both Programme's Learning Outcomes? Can you assign topics to the team at this stage? Should the cohort always be treated as one or are there chances to separate by discipline? 	
How will you ensure students from different disciplines can engage fully in the module?	 Consider How you will ensure communication is clear to students in different parts of the university? Where will the module sit for quality assurance purposes? Can there be assessment choice? 	

3. Stage 2 – Evaluation and Reflective Tool

3.1 About this tool

Purpose: To help module teams identify how to enhance their shared modules by reflecting on how issues relating to multiple disciplinary identities relate to their own context. Module leaders can consider their modules transparency, interdisciplinarity, inclusivity and coordination.

Type: Reflective tool (online worksheet and paper version)

User Focus: Module leaders, module teams

Scenario 1

It is the end of term/year and you are reviewing your student evaluation scores. The students' feedback on your module has not been encouraging. Your module has been running for several years as a siloed/specific module and a new cohort of students from another programme joined the module this year, making it a shared module. You want to identify what you can do to improve the students experience.

Scenario 2

Your shared module team has received rave reviews from students and you have been asked by your Teaching and Learning Lead to share with your colleagues what the secrets are for your success.

Scenario 3

Your programme team is preparing for a review/revalidation. Your module team wants to evaluate and redesign the curriculum.

Description

This reflective tool was designed to help staff examine the hidden and intended curriculum through the lens of their disciplinarity position; interdisciplinarity and consider administrative arrangements and institutional policies affecting their shared module. The tool covers three major areas (Disciplinary culture, curriculum and logistics/administration) designed to help module teams consider benefits and pitfalls of shared modules identified from the research.

Each of the three sections has statements/questions, accompanied by a diagnostic spreadsheet, that supports the user's reflections and helps in identifying areas of strength and weakness in their curriculum. The consequences section of the toolkit highlights implications of the results for teaching and learning. There are also explanations of what low, moderate and high scores indicate on the online version. Users can sort the questions based on whether they want to focus on the transparency, interdisciplinarity or inclusivity aspects of the module.

How to use the Shared Module Evaluate and Reflect Tool	The tool evaluates shared modules across three elements
1. Use the questions below to identify areas of strength in your curriculum and areas for enhancement	Disciplinary culture and context
 Mark yourself from 1 (low) to 3 (high) on how well you can answer the questions. Make a note of specific issues. Low = you have never considered the issue or can hardly answer the question. High = you can answer the question fully. The issue is well addressed in the curriculum. 	Curriculum
3. Use low scores to identify challenges and areas for improvement areas	Logistics and administration

DISCIPLINARY CULTURE/POSITIONALITY Q1 How do the core beliefs I hold about my discipline shape the way I have designed/teach this module AND to what extent do I think about the implications of disciplinary differences between me and the different cohorts of students on the module?	Q2 How has my disciplinary background shaped the characteristics of successful professionals I embody for my students and aim to embed in the curriculum? Do I see these skills only from the perspective of my discipline?	Q3 How clear am I about assumptions I may hold concerning the disciplinary backgrounds and skills of student groups and how these may affect how they connect with me and the module?	Q4 Do I show that I am curious about and appreciate the learning needs and approaches to the learning of students enrolled on my module from programmes outside my discipline; outside my school/department etc?	Q5 Do I engage in active observation in my classroom to understand the dynamics amongst students from different programmes?
CURRICULUM Learning Outcomes Q1 To what extent are your module learning outcomes aligned with the learning outcomes of each programme in which your students are enrolled? Q2 Is the language used to express the module learning outcomes free of jargon and understood by students across different disciplinary backgrounds? Q3 To what extent do my module learning outcomes incorporate or reflect the interdisciplinarity associated with shared modules? Q4 If my module is part of a programme-level accreditation, have I considered how the accreditation might influence the learning outcomes? Q5 To what extent do my learning outcomes reflect the distinct attributes (xxxxxx) associated with shared modules?	Content and Pedagogy Q1 Have I included information to explain the links between the disciplinary areas of my students? Q2 Have I considered activities that can speak to or are relevant for the disciplinary identities of all students enrolled in the shared module? Q3 Have I taken steps to ensure there is enough support for students who might be less familiar with the main discipline(s) underpinning my module? Q4 Have I taken steps to ensure the content is challenging enough for students who are more familiar with the main discipline(s) underpinning my module? Q5 Have I provided students with opportunities to interact with other students beyond their respective disciplinary affiliation? Q5 Have I considered how to communicate about the benefits and challenges of shared modules to my students?	Assessment Q1 Have students already undertaken a similar type of assessment in their degree programmes? Q2 Is interdisciplinarity reflected in the proposed assessment? Q3 Does my assessment favour students with a particular disciplinary background/affiliation? 4 If my module is part of a programmelevel accreditation, have I considered how the accreditation might impact the choice of assessment?	Reflections	
Class size, timetabling, module delivery structure Q1 Am I aware of the typical class size students are taught in their programmes? (e.g. are the students used to large or small size classes?) Q2 Is the size of the class (both in lectures and workshops) appropriate to ensure students' engagement and participation? Q3 Do I know whether students belonging to the same programmes have been allocated to the same class or whether classes are mixed (e.g. attended by students from different programmes)? Q4 Am I aware of how the different programmes' timetabling restrictions impact the timetable of the shared module? (e.g. for group work) Q5 Am I satisfied with the module delivery structure (lectures and workshops) and student numbers per session? (e.g. do I feel I need more or less time for lectures or workshops? Would I prefer having more/less students allocated to the lecture/workshops?)	Team teaching/support/feedback mechanism Q1 To what extent does the teaching team reflect the disciplinary affiliations of the students? Q2 To what extent does clear communication exist among members of the teaching team (with regards to individual roles and contribution)? Q3 Am I aware of any school/university level support in place for students who might have difficulties with aspects of the shared module (e.g. numeracy; disciplinary norms in academic writing and referencing; etc.)? Q4 Am I satisfied with the formal and/or informal feedback mechanisms in place for the shared modules from all the programmes to capture interdisciplinarity? (method & quality of feedback?)			

Review the areas where you have given yourself a low score. Identify the top challenges that you need to address to embed transparency, interdisciplinarity and inclusivity so that you can enhance your module. Focus on a few top priorities and make a list of actions you can take.



Disciplinary Culture/Positionality - Top challenges, opportunities and action points



Curriculum - Top challenges, opportunities and action points



Logistics /Administration/Coordination - Top challenges, opportunities and action points

4. Stage 3 - Delivery Tools

4.1 About this tool

Purpose: This is collection of practical classroom tools that will support a shared module teaching team to improve delivery of the shared module curriculum.

Types: Getting started preparation checklist; Module communication infographic and templates; Student interaction and engagement activities

User Focus: Module leader and teaching team

These tools aim to improve the classroom practice of tutors and the learning and experience of students. The first tool helps module teams to organise their preparations for teaching a shared module so they can capture the benefits and mitigate potential problems. The purpose of the second tool is to improve communication and raise students' awareness of whether, why and how their module is shared. The third tool describes activities that tutors could use to foster disciplinary interaction across different cohorts of students in a shared classroom at the beginning of the module, during the module and when assessing the module.

4.2 Getting started preparation checklist

Scenarios:

Scenario 1

You are the new module leader for an existing shared module. You have never taught a shared module before and would like to know what you should consider in the lead up to teaching delivery. You use this tool the month before delivery, and work through the suggested actions, considering which ones might be relevant for your module.

Scenario 2

You are the module leader for a new shared module. You have been involved in the design and use this checklist as a reminder of things to do, just before module delivery.

Scenario 3

You are the module leader for an existing shared module. Several months ago, you used the shared module reflective tool in an effort to improve student feedback on your module. You identified several actions and would like to make sure these, alongside other best practice, is implemented in your module. You use the checklist, in the month prior to module delivery as a reminder of things to do.

Action	Complete	N/A
Improving communication with staff and students		
Communicate with teaching team on differing student profiles in their assigned seminars/teaching groups including:		
 Programmes of students Modules previously studied or qualifications on entry (e.g. programme tariff and Maths/English requirements) 		
 Assessment experience of students Any differences planned for module delivery or assessment for different student profiles. 		
Arrange support for seminar tutors/delivery team to address any gaps in programme specific knowledge or examples.		
Share/advise teaching team on additional materials available for students suitable for bridging gaps in knowledge or skills.		
Include the 'Shared Modules Communication' in first lecture slides and/or on your VLE.		
Decide on communications strategy ensuring interaction will be equal for all students regardless of degree programme. Share with staff and students e.g. via VLE, first lecture.		
Arrange feedback mechanisms which will encourage all students to provide feedback.		
Personal action point:		
Improving assessment		
Arrange additional assessment support sessions to meet identified gaps.		

Make any programme specific information clearly	
identifiable on VLE e.g. programme specific assessment	
briefs.	
Create alternative assessment options/scenarios for each	
disciplinary identity.	
discipantary identity.	
Personal action point:	
Improving teaching delivery	
Create pre-reading or learning activities by programme,	
suitable for bridging students gaps in knowledge or skills.	
Publish pre-reading or learning activities (by programme)	
to be completed before the module starts.	
Create and incorporate 'getting to know you' activities in	
the first seminar/equivalent delivery session.	
Avenue and ditional augment assessments by myseveness	
Arrange additional support sessions by programme as	
required e.g. maths and stats help.	
ldentify peer to peer advisors and set up peer to peer	
support sessions.	
Set up discussion boards to encourage peer learning.	
Create and incorporate more challenging material to	
stretch students who may be more familiar with the main	
discipline.	
discipane.	
Incorporate examples which are programme relevant in to	
teaching materials e.g. lecture slides, seminar questions.	
Arrange for a programme specific lecturer to contribute in	
face-to-face sessions or provide programme specific	
examples.	
·	
Invite discipline specific guests e.g. industry experts, guest	
speakers, alumni.	
Incorporate careers-focussed sessions or examples.	
Incorporate opportunities for students to interact beyond	
their respective disciplinary affiliation.	
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Include materials which explain the links between the	
disciplinary areas of the students.	
Incorporate options which allow students to personalise	
their learning e.g. different assessments, seminar	
questions.	
For group activities – decide how groups will be formed	
e.g. programme specific groups, mixed groups from	
different programmes or specific roles for specific	
programmes.	
Personal action point:	

4.3 Module communication infographic and templates

This tool is designed to provide students with key information about their shared module in simple formats. It is available graphically and in Word. This tool allows students to be provided with details of the different programmes sharing the modules, whether as a core or as an option. It also makes the alignment between students' programme learning outcomes and the module, transparent.

The module leader creates and fills in the infographic and shows the infographic to students on a slide at the first lecture of the module. Alternatively, the module leader could opt to include an information box in the module handbook with key details of the shared status of the module.

A PowerPoint template for this infographic will be available on the project website as will be a template for a word document that can be included in the module handbook.

Key information that a module leader would need to use this tool include:

- Which programmes are sharing the module.
- Which programme learning outcomes are delivered and assessed by this module.
- Why this module has been created as a shared module or is now delivered as a shared module.
- What benefits does this being a shared module have for the students.
- How will the module address any differences in disciplinary background to maintain inclusivity.

Infographic Template

Insert title of slide Insert core programmes on this module: Insert optional programmes on this module: Insert programme outcomes which this module assesses and delivers: Insert shared module rationale 1 Insert shared module rationale 2 Insert shared module rationale 3

Example for University of Lincoln - slide to be shown to students at first lecture.

Why and how is this module shared

Core Programmes: Business and Finance, Banking and Finance Optional Programmes: Business Studies

Programme Outcomes (see your programme handbook):
Business and Finance: IS11,13,15,16,17,18. KU1,2,3,48.PS9,10,14,23
Banking and Finance: IS6,8.KU1,3,4.PS10.TS14
Business Studies: IS6,7.PS9,11,12,TS16

Disciplinary Interaction -: Allows students to interact with students with different but related disciplinary perspectives.

New Horizons -Allows students to be exposed to new disciplinary knowledge and careers possibilities which are relevant to their programmes.

Social- Allows students to interact from a pastoral perspective with other students from similar multidisciplinary areas.

FIN302

Word version Template (for module handbook)

This module is shared between:

challenges.

Insert Core Programmes:
Insert Optional Programmes:
Programme Learning Outcomes:
Create a link which shows students the programme outcomes delivered and assessed by this module for each programme.
INSERT LINK
Why this module is shared:
Insert a simple rationale as to the benefits of this module being a shared module. Using a group of standardised rationales for your institution or using the themes of this research as key headings would allow a greater level of comparability between modules and help create a system for communicating about shared modules with students.
Detailed rationale (No more than 500 words)

Insert a more detailed rationale of why this module has been created as or is delivered as a shared module including the benefits of doing so. If there are challenges which also need to be addressed, this allows the module leader to outline any ways in which they may be attempting to mitigate these

Example for University of Lincoln module handbook

Shared Modules

This module is shared between:

Core Programmes: Business and Finance (BUSFIN), Banking and Finance (BANFIN)

Optional Programmes: Business Studies (BUSBUS)

Programme Learning Outcomes:

Please click your programme code to see how this module delivers and assesses your programme outcomes:

BUSFIN BANFIN BUSBUS

Why this module is shared:

Social: Allows students to interact from a pastoral perspective with other students from similar multidisciplinary areas.

New Horizons: Allows students to be exposed to new disciplinary knowledge and careers possibilities which are relevant to their programmes.

Disciplinary Interaction: Allows students to interact with other students who have different but related disciplinary perspectives.

Detailed rationale

Personal Financial Planning explores aspects personal finance including taxation, finance regulation and investment planning. This content seems aligned with potential career routes of students on banking, business and finance orientated degrees and aims to open up new horizons of knowledge and career types compared with other modules taught on the programmes. The first assignment allows students to work together in groups and having up to three programmes increases the diversity of group dynamics and allows for peer-to-peer learning from a variety of disciplinary perspectives. No programme on this course has studied any taxation or financial planning knowledge prior to the module.

4.4 Student engagement and interaction activities

These classroom activities can be used by tutors to facilitate disciplinary interaction; build relationships between tutors and students and between students enrolled on different programmes. These can be used at different points in the module, as considered appropriate.

Scenario 1

You are a module leader planning your first lecture for a shared module. You would like to incorporate an activity which encourages your students to get to know each other. You use this tool to help you decide which potential questions or topics you can include in the activity.

Scenario 2

You are a seminar tutor, planning your first tutorial session for approximately 20 students. The module leader has provided you some questions to review, however you have time to include another activity. You feel it is important to get to know your group, especially as you have students from different programmes in the same seminar group. You use the tool by reviewing the ideas given and creating a new activity which your students will complete in groups of 4/5.

Tutors will create an activity which allows the below questions/topics to be discussed amongst the group. The more creative the better! The module leader will learn about the profile of the students in the class to assist with future teaching and learning activities, whilst simultaneously allowing students to become aware of the disciplinary affiliations of other students in the classroom.

Students can be invited to reflect on the following questions/topics at the beginning of the term.

- What programmes are taking my module?
- Why did I choose this module? Why do I need to study this module?
- · How is the module going to be useful for me?
- What am I hoping to get from the module?
- How will this knowledge help me in my degree/future career?
- What are my concerns in relation to the module?

Ideas:

- 1. Card matching game create character cards for different professions/careers with corresponding descriptions on topics/content from the module that is useful for that career.
- 2. Videos from subject experts short videos from staff from all programmes explaining why this topic is relevant for current and future study/work.
- 3. Order students via programme and then create groups using a simple numbering system to create mixed groups. Groups are then given time to answer questions and a nominated spokesperson can feedback to the class.
- 4. Speed networking half the class sit in hot desks while the other half move around the room, spending two minutes with each.
- 5. Myth busting in your groups decide on the top 3 concerns about studying the module. Share with wider class and lecturer ... who will share the truth/offer additional support etc. The tutor could anticipate myths/concerns using previous feedback.

6. Ask students to produce a 300-500 words blogpost, guided by the questions above, and share it on the VLE. Then ask them to offer comments to the posts of their peers. Alternatively, students can share their thoughts in class in the form of a short presentation (3-5 minutes).

Scenario 3

You are module leader who want students to bring different disciplinary perspectives to bear on a topic.

Cross-disciplinary Class activity - For specific topics OR at the final lecture or seminar session, using educational technology tools (e.g., Mentimeter) ask students to participate in the class discussion "what can you share?". A lecturer can pick up a recent/topical issue and after providing a brief commentary invite students to offer an alternative view on the discussed problem; applying knowledge received at other module(s) on their programme. Students should be treated as experts in their fields and be encouraged to search for common themes or complementary theories they have studied in different modules.

Scenario 4

You want to create an assessment that will be inclusive and allow students to use different disciplinary insights to demonstrate their learning

Summative assignment (one element)- Students can provide an analysis to a business case/problem taking the perspective of their discipline. For example, a typical assignment for a strategic management module (a common example of a shared module in many business schools) is a business case analysis. It often involves the task to provide strategic recommendations to solve identified issues; students can be given an opportunity to offer additional analysis taking the perspective of their own discipline when providing recommendations to the company analysed.

The assignment task could be formulated in the following way: "In the final section of your report/presentation provide recommendations to the analysed business/company from the perspective of your discipline (e.g., Accounting, Marketing etc.); use relevant references and additional analysis to support your arguments".