Statement of Principles on Interdisciplinarity[1]

Preamble

There is a wide spectrum of research activity globally – from basic to applied, and from traditional fields to points where disciplines converge. These are all undertaken to support the advancement of knowledge. While disciplinary excellence is essential, there is growing recognition of the value of fostering interdisciplinarity within a system of world-class knowledge networks that transcend disciplinary and geographical boundaries. To this end, research funding agencies have a critical role in creating the enabling environment necessary for investing in and supporting interdisciplinary research.

Accordingly, the participants in the Global Research Council 2016 Annual Meeting recognise the following key principles that underpin the funding, management and evaluation of interdisciplinary research.[2]

Principles

Research excellence

Research excellence is the foundation for the financial support provided by GRC participants. Interdisciplinarity is not a goal in itself, nor is there an assumption that it is better or more valuable than disciplinary research. Rather, interdisciplinarity is a means to approach research and address complex problems in ways that create new knowledge, define new areas of activities, disciplines and approaches, and offer new solutions.

A diverse approach

A diversity of approaches – ranging from researcher-driven to large-scale coordinated programs – is necessary to support interdisciplinary research most effectively. If interdisciplinary funding is to align with government priorities, GRC participants should be actively involved in the articulation of research agendas as well as the provision of funding.

Research Infrastructures

GRC participants recognise the value of research infrastructure in facilitating interdisciplinary research. The planning and development of new research infrastructure, at all appropriate scales, should include consideration of the potential to support and enable interdisciplinary research.

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[1] Interdisciplinary research may be identified as research where two or more disciplines work together to produce a common body of work.

[2] The Statement should be read in conjunction with the recommendations in the report *Survey Report on Interdisciplinarity* which was commissioned by the co-hosts of the 2016 Annual Meetings.

Creating a robust and supportive environment

GRC participants should encourage research across disciplinary boundaries by developing and implementing systems, practices and mechanisms that recognise and accommodate interdisciplinarity. GRC participants should engage with all relevant stakeholders involved in research to collaborate in sponsoring and developing support for interdisciplinary research.

Review and evaluation

GRC participants should develop effective processes for the review and evaluation of research that reach across, or beyond, disciplinary boundaries.

- Fair, relevant and appropriate review mechanisms should be established that are sensitive and responsive to the purpose and potential impact of successful interdisciplinary research.
- Methods for evaluating interdisciplinary research programmes should consider the special conditions that may exist in these activities. The development of Key Performance Indicators, or alternative mechanisms to facilitate programme evaluation, should be appropriate to the characteristics and requirements of specific interdisciplinary research activities.

Capacity building and management

GRC participants should recognise that, for a variety of reasons, interdisciplinary research projects may be more complex in scope and demanding in execution than discipline-based research. Therefore:

- Appropriate resources and sufficient timeframes should be allocated to ensure that teams have the capacity to organise effectively and to address the challenges of working across disciplinary boundaries, including any necessary training to overcome differences in language and conceptual foundations, recognising that some interdisciplinarity practices are more demanding than others.
- Organisations should develop the capability and capacity to manage and provide oversight specific to interdisciplinary projects and programmes.
- Organisations are encouraged to share and learn from experiences of successful and less successful interdisciplinary initiatives.

Career development

The development of research career paths and a global research culture where interdisciplinary contributions receive appropriate recognition in line with that accorded within traditional disciplinary boundaries is essential. GRC participants should, within the context of their research portfolios, support interdisciplinary research in institutions and for researchers at all career stages.