(Updated on 25/3/2019)

THE EDUCATION UNIVERSITY OF HONG KONG

Guidelines of Pedagogical Devices for
General Education Interdisciplinary Courses

1. Background

1.1 This report provides some examples/guidelines for collaborative teaching of General Education Interdisciplinary Courses (GEICs) with reference to extant literature.

1.2 After collecting feedback from lecturers-in-charge of GEICs, it is noted that all of them would opt for ***interactive mode*** of course delivery, in view of the limitation of course-group offering at the initial stage. In the meantime, they have also indicated interest and possibility of trying out other modes of delivery (e.g. rotational mode and parallel mode) in the future when more GEICs and groups are in place. However, it is vital for lecturers to note that certain important pedagogical devices and approaches (e.g. the emphasis of interdisciplinarity, co-construction orientation) shall be taken into consideration, in spite of the different modes of delivery and course-specific features. Key concepts of GEIC pedagogy, namely co-planning, co-teaching, co-assessing and co-evaluating, are suggested and explained with literature support in below sections (2-5) and is diagrammatically summarized in the **Annex 1**. The GEIC lecturers-in-charge are responsible for leading and co-ordinating various tasks in co-planning, co-teaching, co-assessing and co-evaluating the courses under their custody in order to ensure the smooth and effective implementation of the courses in line with the quality assurance mechanism as stipulated in the Handbook for GEICs.

2. Co-planning

2.1 Lecturers should understand that it will take time to develop the course before teaching, and that equal levels of commitment must be shared by all faculties involved in ensuring the reification of the essence of inter-disciplinarity (Cruz and Zaragoza, 1998).

2.2 Regular planning meetings are vital to enable lecturers to bandy ideas on the philosophy, objectives (expected learning outcomes), learning and teaching strategies, time allocations, learning and teaching activities, class-room management, assessment tasks and rubrics for the whole course. Planning time is also social time to know more about each other, that is to say, it is necessary to plan everything with teaching partners (Bass, 2004; Leavitt, 2006). A full day faculty workshop and/or faculty training workshop(s) could also be useful for professional development among the lecturers through dialogues that cut across disciplines (Bass, 2004).

2.3 In the co-planning process, the lecturers can work together to substantiate the lesson plans not only with resources (from various disciplines), but also with the concrete plans and or schedule(s) on how interdisciplinary teaching is to be implemented throughout the course. The plans/schedules must be made known and explained to students in order to avoid

confusion caused by different modes of delivery that might be necessary for interdisciplinary teaching. More importantly, at the beginning of the semester, students should know which lecturer(s) would be teaching and how (Shibley, 2006).

2.4 The co-planning should combine with necessary refinement through discussion(s) and evidence-based reflections among the teaching team members during the semester. Interim staff-student consultative meeting is helpful in soliciting comments/feedback from various parties in order to make timely improvement in course design and delivery.

3. Co-teaching

3.1 If possible, lecturers can conduct activities that probe students' prior understanding of related theories/concepts related to the interdisciplinary course(s). This sort of pre-assessment might inform lecturers of the pedagogical content knowledge required.

3.2 Lecturers should make time to meet regularly as a team during the process of co-teaching a course in order to familiarize themselves with the inputs from other related disciplines through inter-disciplinary conversations (Cruz and Zaragoza, 1998). E.g. meeting before the class to confirm plans and respond to current event; after class, lecturers can spend a few minutes recapping/debriefing the class (Richter & Thomas, 2011). Setting up a regular phone time or on-line platform to discuss is also a feasible alternative.

3.3 Each lecturer can have a teaching/course package that is made up of the detailed plans and schedules (with resources) and follow it (while allowing for flexibility for diverse student needs) in order to help lecturers stay on track. (Richter & Thomas, 2011).

3.4 Lecturers involved should try to attend their colleague(s)' lectures, take part in co-presentations if feasible/necessary, refer to teaching partner's ideas in the class, and share authority/expertise in front of students so as to make room for the integration of different disciplines (Leavitt, 2006).

3.5 Lecturer(s)-not-in-charge of certain teaching session(s) can also participate in or interact in class. E.g. as a *"kibitzer"* sitting in the class and offering commentary on the other's presentation or lecture (Leavitt, 2006, p.2); Wentworth & Davis also recommended several roles that lecturers-not-in-charge can take: e.g. "*model learner*" to ask questions and otherwise contribute to discussion; "*observer*" to take notes and gauge student response to the presentation; "*discussion leader*" to facilitate or lead break-out groups; or "*devil's advocate*" to raise provocative or challenging questions in an effort to stimulate class creativity (2002, p.27). They can insert short examples or modules within lectures so that to make a good contribution that fosters integration, while at the same time allowing for coherence within the class period (Jessen-Marshall & Lescinsky, 2011).

3.6 "Jigsaw" discussion can be incorporated into class. The lecturers involved can walk through the room independently and offer students their individual views, but not in a setting that can be constructed as confrontational. It is important that lecturers share facilitation of the class equally, this is vital to distribute the work load evenly and to ensure that students recognize lecturers as a team (Richter & Thomas, 2011).

3.7 Apart from collaboration, lecturers can also model debate with teaching partners. Students watch lecturers debate using different methodological approaches, which they can apply in the assignments or other courses. Such professional dialogues and debates can definitely expose students to different disciplinary perspectives that are conducive to disciplinary

integration (Leavitt, 2006). However, Fried & McCarthy (1999) also suggested that it should be conducted after students have become comfortable with teaching team and the class.

3.8 For students, it is vital to create a community within the class (Plank, 2011). An activity called "common ground" (Richter & Thomas, 2011, p.70) can help students to see each other's similarities and differences, build an understanding of each other and create a web of bonds. This sort of dialogic community is instrumental for developing interdisciplinary mindedness with perspective consciousness.

3.9 If necessary, teachers should be able to articulate how their disciplines are relevant and contributive to the holistic picture of the course.

4. Co-assessing

4.1 Grading anxiety is common and challenging in co/team teaching class. Students might wonder who is in charge of grading, i.e. who is the one to be pleased (Plank, 2011).

4.2 Lecturers should apply common grading standard, and make it clear to students at the beginning that all assessment and evaluation decision will be made by lecturers together.

4.3 Lecturers should reflect on the course and from the assessments as a whole once the course has been completed (Cruz and Zaragoza, 1998) in order to make evidence-based and evidence-informed improvement for course delivery.

4.4 Some co/team-assessing experiences and approaches are suggested below according to literature. Lecturers may make reference to these practices to enhance co-assessment quality depending on feasibility and practical needs :

a) For test/exam: Lecturers should meet and agree early on to a general theme of testing, make it explicit in the testing what course expectation is, who will be writing questions on which subjects, and who will be grading them, and also give student a single handout that has separate parts for the different lecturers' contributions. Lecturers can use pre-and post-tests before and during course development and delivery to look at the impact of the course on students' understanding. Also, a united front and consistent message/standard to students on plagiarism is necessary (Jessen-Marshall & Lescinsky, 2011).

b) For paper writing: Students would be asked to identify the topic for writing/assignment/presentation. While teaching, they would be asked to turn in different parts of the writing before compiling together and adding conclusion for writing/presentation. It is not advisable to assign two lecturers to grade an assignment with each of them focusing on a particular area/field of study. Lecturers are advised to read and grade every writing assignment; so each student will receive at least two sets of comments (in different ink colors) and average of two grades for each writing. In addition, each pair of students are considered to review each other's writing, and lecturers meet together with every student for post-assessment review and /or reflection (Liao & Worth, 2011).

c) Another alternative is: All/both lecturers need to read every student's work, but alternate taking primary responsibility for commenting on the work (i.e. 1st comment, then exchange, and then 2nd comment). Based on the comments/inputs, the lecturer who has taken the prime responsibility can invite another lecturer to double-mark and then come up with the decision on the final grade/mark after negotiation/consultation based on the common rubrics.

d) For all assessment tasks, lecturers should draft, discuss and fine-tune the rubrics as a team in order to ensure that there is consensus and consistency on grading policies and criteria. After collecting the assessment tasks/assignments, they can select samples of different bands and conduct trial marking in order to avoid grading/marking inconsistencies and disciplinary fragmentation. All the lecturers' marking should keep a close alignment with the fine-tuned rubrics and lecturers should conduct a standardized grading meeting/moderation *before* massive marking. The rubrics should be made clear to students before and during course implementation.

e) After the completion of grading/marking, lecturers should review the rubrics in consideration of the following issues:
   - whether they are clear, accurate, comprehensive and comprehensible
   - whether they work to enforce interdisciplinary integration
   - whether they are able to help with the achievement of the expected learning outcomes
   - whether students could learn how to make future improvement(s) based on the information of the rubrics

5. Co-evaluating

5.1 At the pilot stage, lecturers can consider either taking students' evaluation of teaching (SET) on individual or collective basis. While the former approach denotes clearly individual accountability, the latter may be more conducive to a holistic evaluation of the selected team-teaching approach. The mode of SET may be changed after piloting, subject to further review and change in the mode(s) of course delivery.

5.2 If SET is to be taken on individual basis, it is advisable for the team to add in a few more SET questions (in Part C) that focus on the evaluation of the course design (including inter-disciplinarity) and selected team teaching approach.

5.3 Lecturers are strongly encouraged to conduct both interim and end-of-semester staff-student consultative meetings in order to collect data/information and feedback that are useful for evaluating interdisciplinary teaching and learning in a more in-depth way.

5.4 As mentioned above, the data/information and feedback collected from SET and staff-student consultative meetings are necessary for the team to identify issues and problems and then work out remedies that lead to continuous improvement of pedagogical practices and resource repertoire.

6. References

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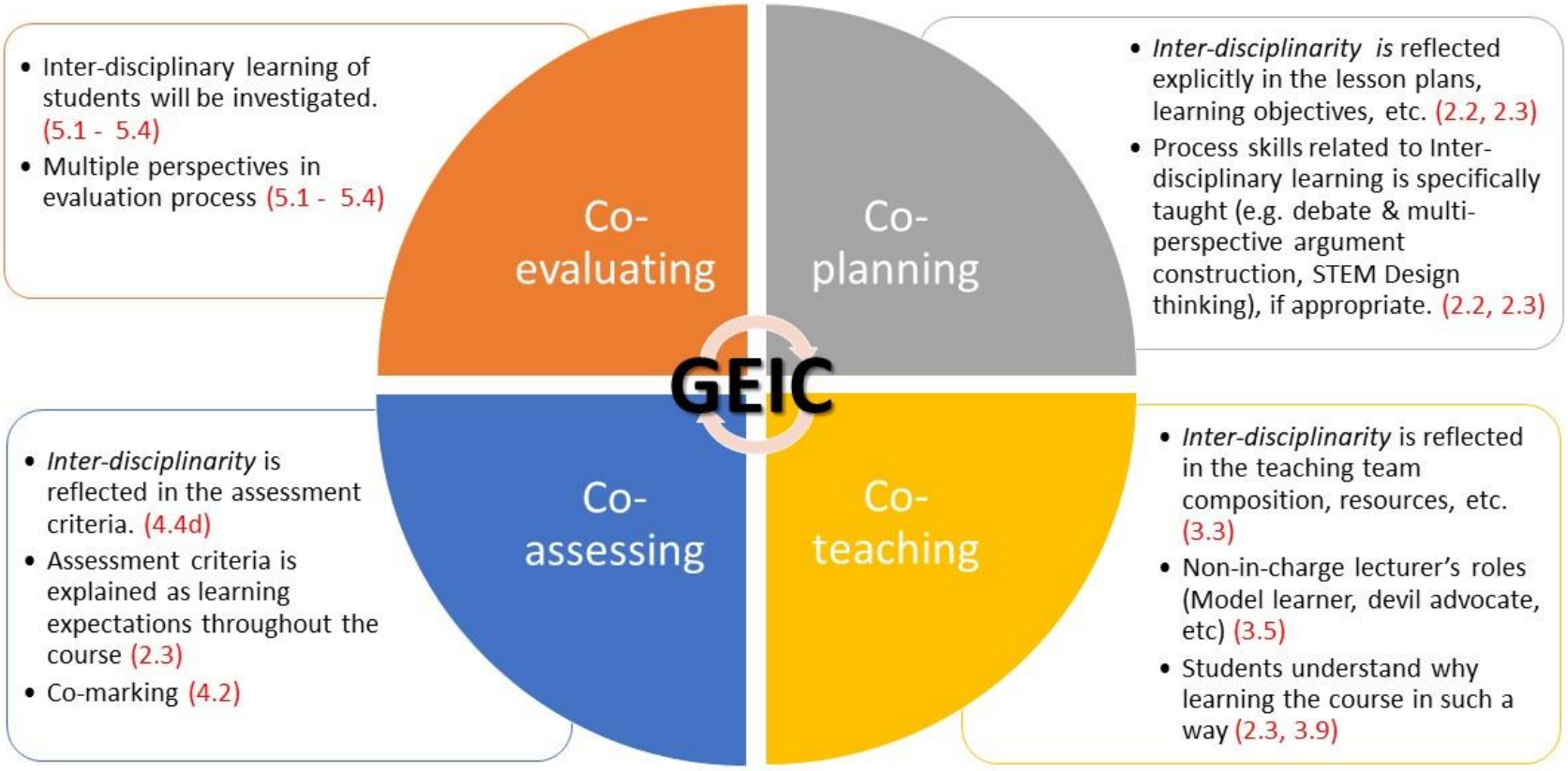
Annex 1

Key concepts of GEIC Pedagogy



Note: GEICs are to be co-ordinated by lecturers-in-charge who will lead the teaching team in devising, implementing and evaluating the strategies and modes for the various tasks in co-planning, co-teaching, co-assessing and co- evaluating the courses.