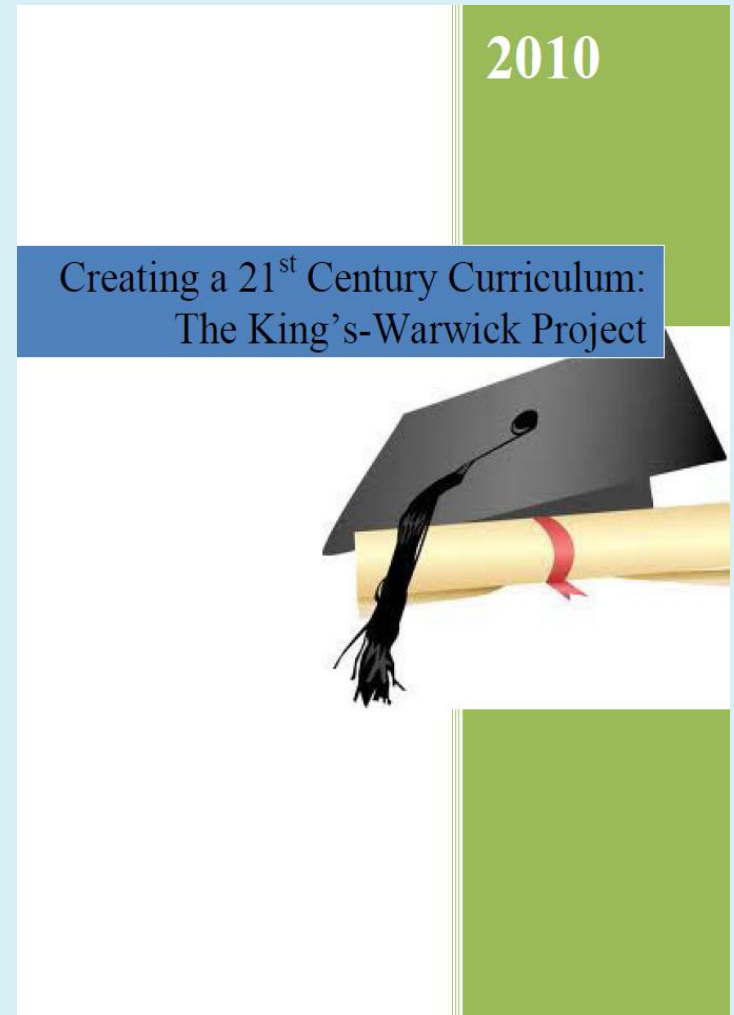


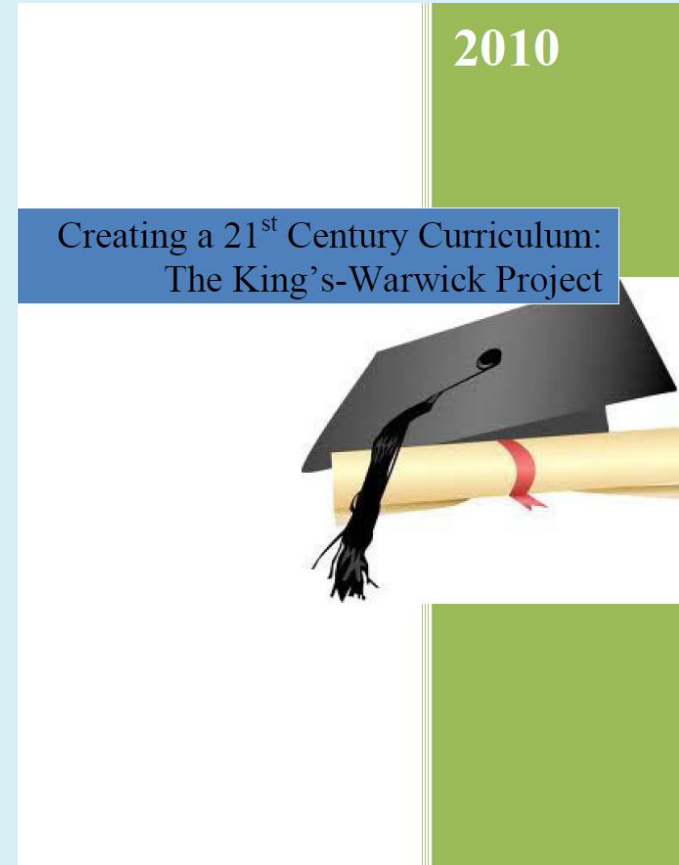
# King's-Warwick project: Interdisciplinarity



# Central issues

- Characteristics of a curriculum?
- Attributes of a graduate?
- Future directions?
- Major curriculum changes in peer institutions?





<http://kingslearning.info/kwp>

# Universities studied

Aberdeen  
Southampton  
LSE  
UCL  
Manchester  
Queen Mary  
KCL  
Warwick

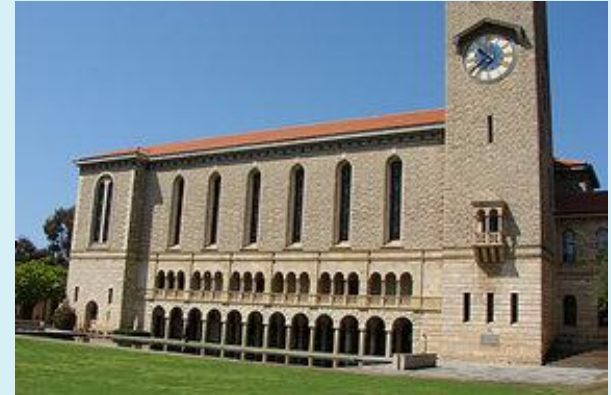
Cape Town  
Witwatersrand  
Stellenbosch

Utrecht  
Maastricht

Chicago  
Wisconsin  
Harvard  
Brown  
Pennsylvania  
Temple  
UCLA

Melbourne  
Sydney  
Western Australia

Hong Kong  
CUHK  
HKUST



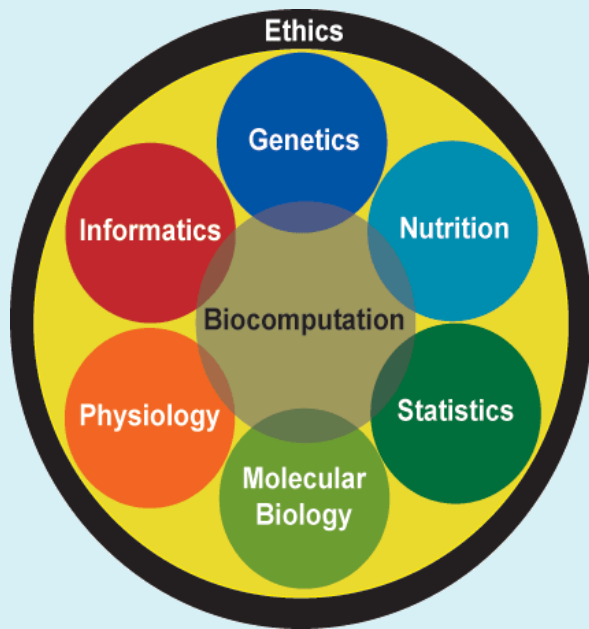
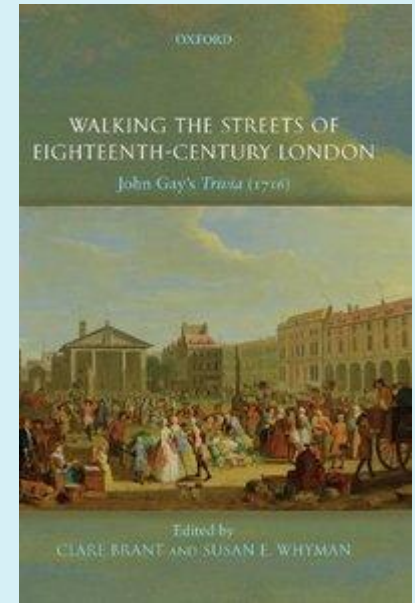
# A graduate “pledge”?

All students to have opportunity to experience:

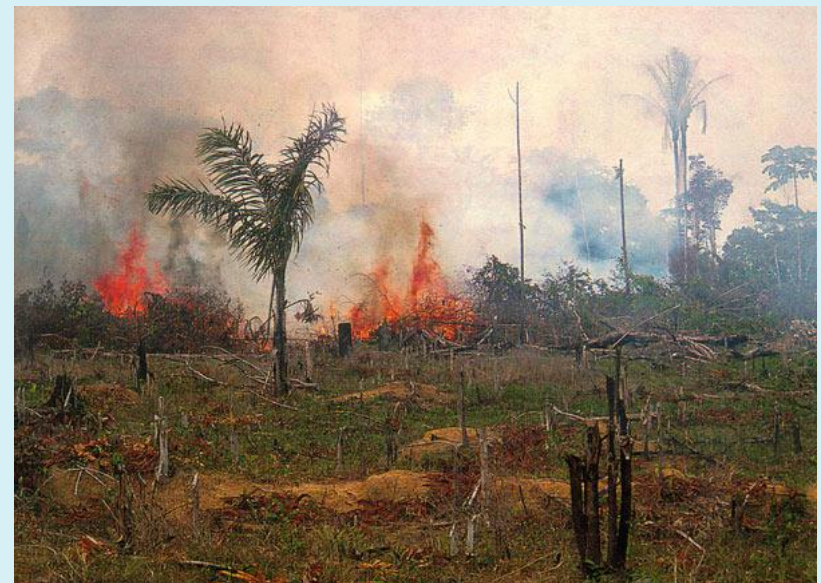
- Research-rich environment
- Interdisciplinarity
- Global connectedness
- Community engagement
- Academic literacy

# Interdisciplinarity

“a means of solving problems and answering questions that cannot be satisfactorily addressed using single methods or approaches”



Why?  
When?  
How?  
Where?



Interdisciplinarity within an educational context can aspire to be

*the encounter with knowledge sets, methodologies and skills from more than one established academic discipline combined with reflection on the relationships between the sets of knowledges, skills and methodologies explored.*

## *Cross-Disciplinary Teaching*

Joint degrees: do they promote or present barriers to interdisciplinary learning?

“Melded” departments: Classics, War Studies, Women’s Studies



# Multidisciplinary teaching

Discipline-centred modules opened up to undergraduates from other departments can often provide a rich and collaborative learning environment. Students feel valued for the perspectives they bring from their own discipline, and learn to articulate more clearly their discipline's particular knowledge base and methodological skills .

Nodal/thematic modules, which address a particular issue, event or artefact from a spectrum of disciplinary perspectives: examples “environmental sustainability”, “fashion in society”, “identity formation and representation”.

# Interdisciplinary teaching methodologies

Interdisciplinarity is a matter of subject content and also of the application of teaching methodologies from one discipline to the teaching of another, and is at its most effective when both content and teaching methodologies are interdisciplinary in this way.

Examples:

Open Space Learning at Warwick using “theory building” and facilitators

Performance based learning and other embodied approaches: “enacting the periodic table”

Place-based learning (Temple University) involving a multi-faceted engagement with a locality

Cultural/sociological approaches to scientific technologies: “visualising the body in medicine and society”

# Methodologies continued

Research-based learning: interdisciplinarity may be one effective way of connecting teaching and advanced research, and of meeting institutional aspirations for “research-led teaching,” especially where the student feels him or herself to be engaging in research or enquiry-based work.

Multiple disciplinary applications of methodologies from one discipline a feature of scientific research (eg. Complexity science, systems biology, nanotechnology)

Historicisation for disciplinary reflective awareness: it is important for students to have a sense of the history of their discipline so that they understand that it is not a transhistorical ‘given’. Example “The Brain in the West”, “A History of Infinity”

# Employer perspectives

‘I think it’s very important when you are learning to actually have several different perspectives. I think it’s very easy to become warped and to have a very strict line of thinking when you’re doing a course like Law, which is why I actually wanted to see a slightly different way of looking at our discipline’.

[Warwick undergraduate taking the module ‘Shakespeare and the Law’]

85.9% of Warwick students consulted felt that knowledge of other disciplines would enhance their career prospects

Employers don’t value interdisciplinarity per se, but value graduates who have developed breadth of perspective, an ability to ‘make parallels between things’.

‘I think students who studied different disciplines tend to bring a better variation in terms of problem solving’ (employer)

Employers emphasised the integration of skills within curricula, as much as through extra-curricula activities, and could see a role for multi-disciplinary study here.