

# A Common Learning Approach

## Question

How can common curriculum content be integrated constructively across professional courses in the Faculty of Health Science, improving interdisciplinary engagement whilst still retaining integrity of individual degree programs?

## Context

The Faculty of Health Science at the University of Tasmania currently teaches professionally accredited undergraduate courses in Nursing, Pharmacy, Medicine, Biomedical science, Paramedical studies and Medical imaging. Further allied health developments are being considered.

Logistical and political problems beset the introduction of common units or modules into externally accredited professional courses. Yet an interdisciplinary approach is needed to model realities in modern healthcare practice.

## Establishing a Common Learning Approach

The UTAS Faculty of Health Science is adopting a more flexible approach to sharing curriculum content, which has initially been utilised for the introduction of emerging health issues and demographic trends. This 'common learning approach' (CLA) can be characterized as different models for providing common curriculum content across the health disciplines to achieve Faculty objectives of:

- increasing teaching and learning efficiency in a climate of expansion in course offerings; and, where this can logically be included;
- improving opportunities for transferable interdisciplinary learning (teamwork activity modelling inter-professional practice in primary health care).

## Common Learning Outcomes

A key part of the project is looking at the identification of 'common learning outcomes'. These are outcomes generic to the health curricula and which can be recognised as needs across courses. They can be stated in terms general enough to have cross-disciplinary applicability, and linked to examples of more specific objectives from each of the professional courses.

A shared resource with identified common learning outcomes is more attractive to different teaching Schools for integration into an existing unit than imposing a prescribed curriculum.

Now the Schools have to set their specific criteria to meet the common learning outcomes and construct appropriate assessment activities to demonstrate they are achieved through their courses. This is an area which has barely been addressed as yet, and provides a potential forum for interdisciplinary discussion.

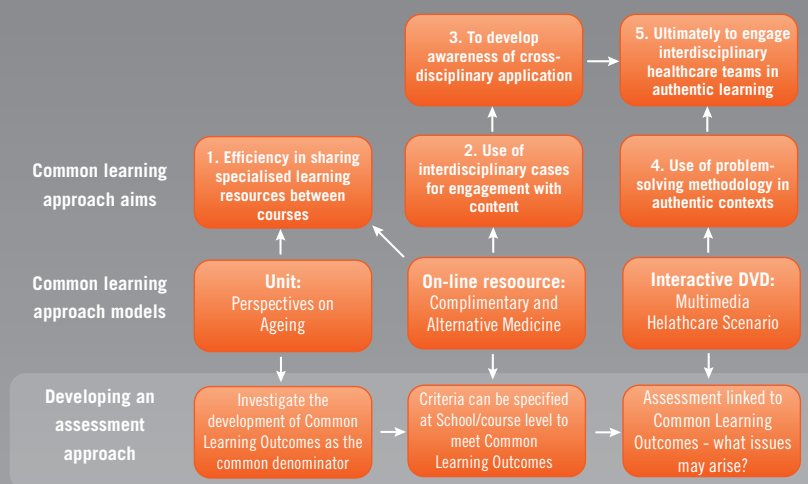
*"The author of the interactive DVD had specifically developed it for her course in health informatics. But she recognises the application in other courses too. In order to make it more accessible to these courses we will include the common learning outcomes related to problem analysis, team building, managing resources etc – there's no reason why it shouldn't be useful for business courses too in fact."*



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Common Learning Approach: developing models and aligning assessment

## Challenges

What are the assessment challenges faced in an interdisciplinary learning environment and how can these best be met to benefit the student experience as well as meet institutional and professional requirements?

As the common learning approach is a new focus in the Faculty some implications for assessment are yet to be explored:

- When a curriculum resource is shared, how will different disciplines interpret and assess a common learning outcome, and could this have application for inter-professional learning?
- How do different disciplines define and assess concepts such as 'professionalism' and 'inter-professional activity'? If these competencies are assessed in an interdisciplinary context, should their different professional roles affect assessment expectations?