**Title:** Exploring interdisciplinary challenge-led learning opportunities for knowledge co-creation.

**Strand:** - Sector Priorities,

**Session:** 1 hour interactive breakout session

**Keywords:** Interdisciplinary, extra-curricular, challenge-led learning, commercial awareness, knowledge exchanges.

**Abstract (100 words):**

Embedding interdisciplinarity into the UG experience is not without its challenges. The practical arguments and value to learning is strong, supported by policy makers, funding councils and professional bodies. The aim of this session is to present interdisciplinary challenge-led learning as a new mode of knowledge production to build intellectual capacity, knowledge co-creation and to develop learning communities.

Delegates will:

* engage in critical reflection of embedding interdisciplinary into the student experience;
* consider the frameworks to develop learning communities, professional networks, attributes and skills.

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engage in knowledge exchange through the sharing of policy, practice and experience across institutions.

**Bio (100 words):**

Jess Power joined Staffordshire University in 2018 as Professor of Teaching and Learning and Associate Dean for Students. She is a Senior Fellow of the UK Higher Education Academy and holds the status of National Teaching Fellow. Prof Power believes that excellence in teaching should be all encompassing, drawing together a diverse range of knowledge, skills, abilities and attributes. Her focus on interdisciplinarity enabled her to transform the student experience by creating networks for students and the commercial sector, who share common goals of transferring knowledge beyond discipline boundaries.

**Outline (500 words)**

It is widely accepted that innovative/sustainable solutions for complex global-challenges reach beyond a discipline boundary or methodological approach (McLeish & Strang 2014) and as such the practical argument for embedding interdisciplinary collaborations into higher education (HE) is strong and supported by policy makers, funding councils and professional bodies (QAA 2012; RAE 2012; DC 2015). Whilst nothing may be more rewarding than a group of minds focusing towards a common goal; it has been recognised that embedding interdisciplinary working into the undergraduate experience (UG) is not without its challenges. A major obstacle within HE institutional settings is that each discipline has developed its own goals for academic endeavours, which has led to a closed minded and parochial approach to teaching and research. This session challenges pre-conceived ideas by breaking down discipline barriers and embedding interdisciplinary challenge-led learning opportunities into the UG experience.

The session begins with an interactive exploration of interdisciplinarity and the development of communities for learning which have the potential to provide solutions to complex global challenges. It recognises that in a capitalised society graduates contribute significantly to production, distribution, and wealth exchange; whilst also placing value on the fundamental role of universities, as institutions for the creation and dissemination of knowledge, producing graduates who have a genuine commitment to society. In today’s global economy and in society as a whole we are faced with many complex challenges which require new ways of working and the development of advanced skills and attributes. Interdisciplinary challenge-led learning is presented as a new mode of knowledge production, it focuses on building intellectual capacity through creating sustainable networks to co-create knowledge and develop learning communities to equip graduates to deal with and provide solutions to complex challenges.

A case study is presented for integrating challenge-led learning into the UG experience based on evidence gathered during 2012-2017. Two contrasting frameworks are presented for introducing complex global challenges and commercial challenges into an interdisciplinary context. This session evaluates challenges, successes and provides a synthesis of impact in terms of skill development from the student’s perspective. It is a blueprint for experiential learning in practice, and a best practice example which could be simulated across the sector. The connected approach overcame institutional, discipline and individual barriers within the sector to foster a culture of integration across disciplines. It transcendence traditional discipline boundaries, created a platform for new forms of knowledge-sharing and enable the students to develop a tool belt of transferable skills.

This presentation will be of interest to all academics who wish to transcend disciplines and develop new epistemological approaches. Providing opportunities for development of problem solving, teamwork, self-awareness and interpersonal communication skill whilst extending their students’ professional network. It will also be of interest to HE leaders who wish to explore mechanisms for embedding learning communities, enhancing knowledge co-creation and developing commercial awareness to build a sense of belonging within the academic community and the wider HE network.