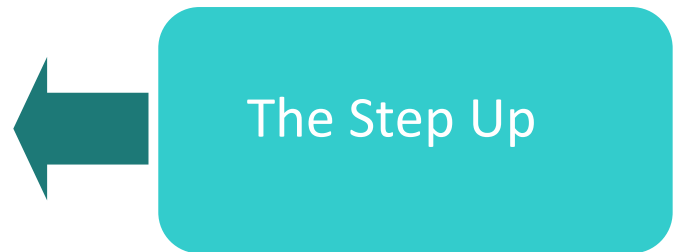# Postgraduate Basics

Postgraduate study builds on existing skill and knowledge, and therefore much of it is about exploring your area of practice, redefining skills to both extend and expand them, and researching topics in a lot more depth.

Postgraduate learning is therefore self-directed learning in which self-directed inquiry is of utmost importance.

The Step Up

Three elements to teaching and learning

Core

The core elements are those aspects of the programme that provide essential academic threads that are pre-determined and consistent throughout all courses offered at postgraduate level. These elements are essential for the successful and effective outcomes of the programmes that address industry, student, organisational, and professional needs and expectations. They are demonstrated through the embedding of agreed graduate qualities, standard of teaching methods, and essential assessment criteria.
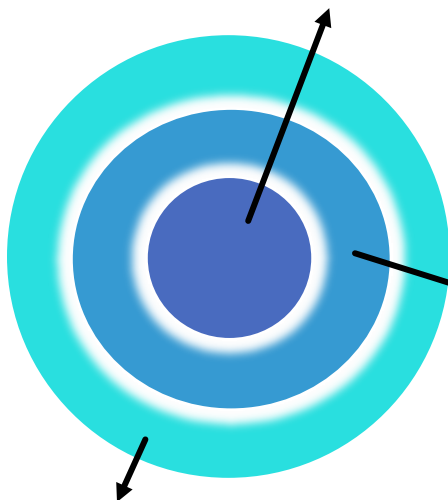
Evidence-based excellence

Evidence-based excellence relates to the acquired knowledge that is expanded upon through reading extensively, exploring the research literature, and applying new knowledge to your practice area.

Innovation

Innovation takes you from concrete foundational information that is essential in your field of practice, to using the research and evidence to expand your practice in a way that you are now looking outside of the square and asking questions, such as What are we doing? Why do we do it this way? Is it the best way? What could we change? How does it improve the service we provide?

Peer Discussion

Peer discussion is essential, and with much of the work being done online, you as students need to actively participate in the forums and discussions that are provided by your lecturers in EIT Online courses. Online activities become the classroom interaction, and should follow that same discussion and inquiry process that a teacher would have with you in a face-to-face classroom setting.

Online forums focus you on the skills and knowledge that you require for the subject/theme under discussion. Whilst lecturers do not need to stipulate the number of responses you provide, the discussion and debate generated by your input into other students' discussions and the sharing of ideas are key to successful peer learning, subject focus, and collaboration. Table 1 below is an example of a guide to postgraduate forum discussions.

Online Forums

Table 1

Guide to Forum Discussions

Assessment criteria	Performance standard
Writing provides a clear, coherent, and independent exposition of knowledge and ideas	Writing • reflects the writer's own voice • is logical with no extraneous details • demonstrates fresh, original thought and reflections
Knowledge of content area and development of ideas are demonstrated	• All points are fully elaborated on and support ideas • Original thoughts and ideas are presented and supported with clear, accurate, and detailed information and references

THE EXPERIENCE YOU NEED & THE SUPPORT TO SUCCEED

EIT

Table 1 cont.

Guide to Forum Discussions

Assessment criteria	Performance standard
Reflection	• Seeks to understand concepts by examining openly own experiences in the past as they relate to the topic, to illustrate points • Demonstrates an open, non-defensive ability to self-appraise • In-depth synthesis of thoughtfully selected aspects of experiences related to the topic • Makes clear connections between what is learned from outside experiences and the topic
Participation in discussion	• Maintains flow and quality of discussion without prompting • Helps to redirect or refocus discussion when it becomes side-tracked or unproductive
Critical thinking	• Identifies embedded or implicit issues, addressing their relationships to each other • Formulates a clear and precise personal point of view and acknowledges objections and rival positions, providing convincing replies to these • Identifies and evaluates some of the more hidden and more abstract concepts • Rigorously evaluates all important evidence offered • Provides new data or information for consideration
Engagement with the literature	• Concepts are drawn from wider literature evaluated in depth • Information is referenced

Note. From *Grading and Performing Rubrics,* by Eberly Center, n.d.
(http://www.cmu.edu/teaching/designteach/teach/rubrics.html). Copyright 2020 by Carnegie Mellon University.

Interdisciplinary Learning

In many postgraduate courses at EIT an interdisciplinary learning (IDL) approach is followed. You will be learning alongside people from different walks of life and from different professional perspectives.

The IDL approach is supported by many researchers who outline several characteristics of the student, the learning environment, and the learning process, which all come together to influence learning outcomes. Every student brings with them a set of learned knowledge and skills that they then use and adapt to current learning opportunities, which are set by the experiential process, the teaching, assessment, and curriculum content.

In health care this professional skill and knowledge has traditionally been drawn from one health professional perspective because of the single learning environment from which they come: Nurses are taught and socialised by nurses in nursing schools, and medical doctors are taught by medical doctors in medical schools, rather than being exposed to the wider health care professional environment in the initial formative learning years.

IDL in the Health Sector

Moore (2007) states that the desired outcome of knowledge and learning is evidenced in the student's "capacity to act effectively in the world in respect to some situated goal, to recognise, to understand, to make sense and do" (p. 183). In the health professional's case, the goal is patient centred care where the clinical skill is as important as the professional skill, and where the health care team contribution is the sum of all those skills and professions that work together for optimum health care delivery.

Given that IDL is seen as integrative, the outcome is interdisciplinary thinking in which all players within the team have a much broader understanding of and insight into all facets of clinical and professional skill, interpretation, and interaction.

Figure 1

Inter-disciplinary Thinking Outcome of IDL
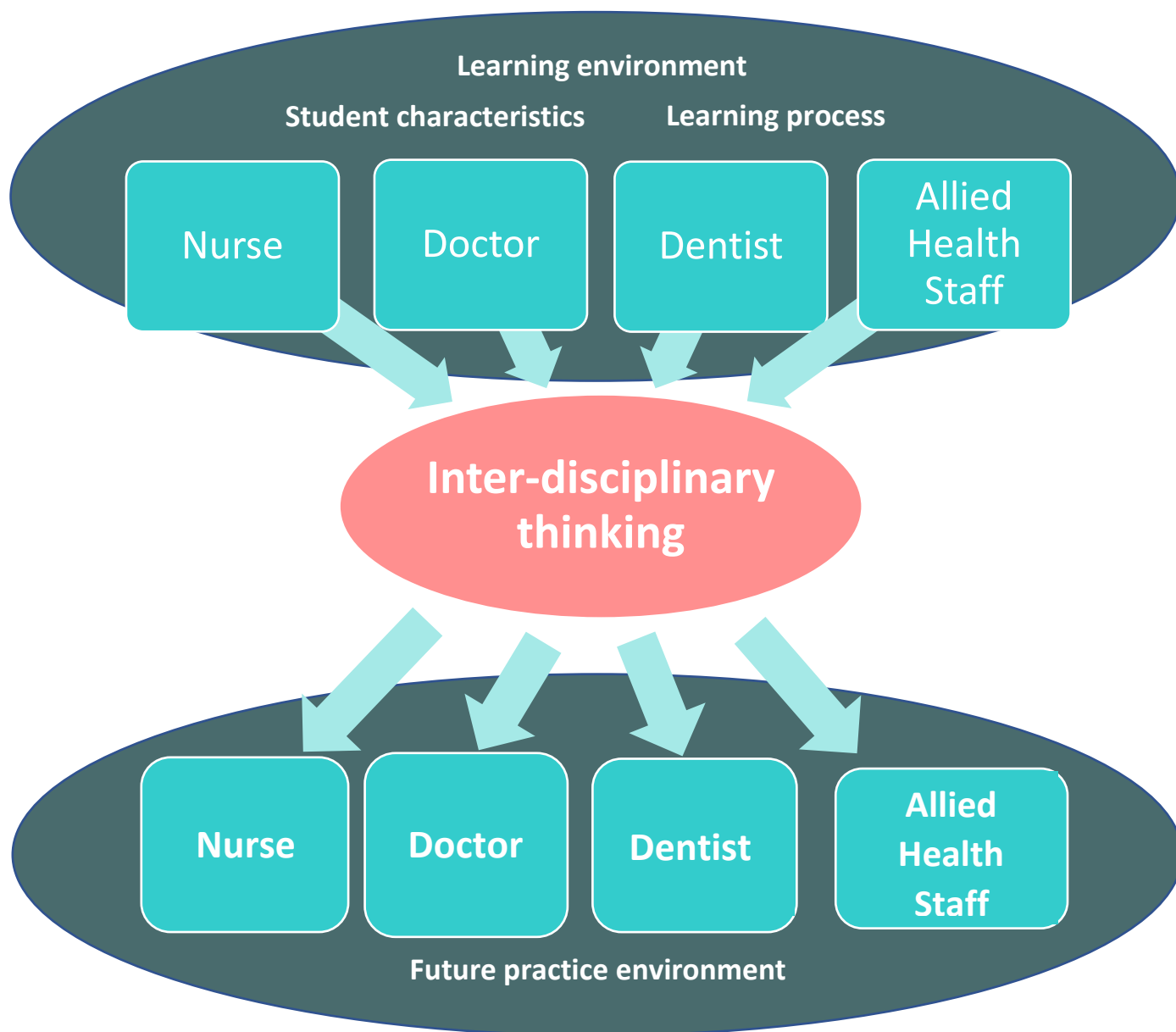
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