Appendix A

TERMS OF REFERENCE – Interdisciplinarity

The overarching scope of this work is to investigate how interdisciplinary research is carried out, and whether the processes are in place to support it, through research and teaching.

The Working Group for this project would like to consider the following questions:

- **Researchers and academics**: How can researchers and academics forge long-term careers in interdisciplinary areas, and how does involvement in interdisciplinary research early in an academic career influence career paths?

- **Universities**: How do university structures and systems (e.g. department structures and teaching delivery) accommodate interdisciplinary research?

- **Funders**: Is the focus on interdisciplinary or challenge based research appropriate? Do current models of research funding support interdisciplinary research to the extent that they should?

- **Assessment**: How is assessment of interdisciplinary research best carried out?

- **International**: How is interdisciplinary research carried out in an international context?

- **Humanities and Social Sciences**: How do moves towards more challenge-based, interdisciplinary research affect the humanities and social sciences in particular?

- **Publishers**: What are the publishing routes for interdisciplinary research, and how do the existing routes for publication impact on researchers’ career prospects?

- **Government**: What role does, and should, government have in promoting and supporting interdisciplinary, challenge-led research?

- **Industry**: In what way is interdisciplinary academic training valued by industry?
Detailed questions to be considered include:

**Researchers and academics:** How can researchers and academics forge long-term careers in interdisciplinary areas, and how does involvement in interdisciplinary research early in an academic career influence career paths?

*Detailed questions for research:*

- How can researchers and academics (from PhD study onwards) forge long-term careers in interdisciplinary areas, and how does involvement in interdisciplinary research early in an academic career influence career paths? How does it affect the careers of researchers who may change disciplines or who want to move back into a ‘pure’ discipline? How will more senior researchers respond? What is the evidence base in terms of the support for interdisciplinary research and researchers?

**Universities:** How do university structures and systems (e.g. department structures and teaching delivery) accommodate interdisciplinary research?

*Detailed questions for research:*

- What kinds of structures work best? What perceptions do universities have of their role in supporting or accommodating interdisciplinary research? How do universities work with industry, and are these partnerships more important in an interdisciplinary environment? How do universities create departmental structures that are sustainable as well as supporting cross-disciplinary and interdisciplinary work?

**Funders:** Is the focus on interdisciplinary or challenge based research appropriate? Do current models of research funding support interdisciplinary research to the extent that they should?

*Detailed questions for research:*

- What should the balance be between challenge-based research funding and funding for more ‘pure’ research? Do Doctoral Training Centres and Centres for Doctoral Training help to both promote interdisciplinary research and provide the basis for enduring academic careers? Can the prize model help meet interdisciplinary challenges? How does that affect funding? In particular, this activity could analyse the Research Councils’ cross council challenges such as ‘Living with Environmental Change’ and the new NEXUS call. How do researchers applying for Research Council money actually engage with these cross-council programmes?

**Assessment:** How is assessment of interdisciplinary research best carried out?

*Detailed questions for research:*

- Does interdisciplinary research present challenges for research assessment? Do current models of research assessment adequately measure the quality of interdisciplinary research?
International: How is interdisciplinary research carried out in an international context?

Detailed questions for research:

- Will this move towards greater interdisciplinarity foster more international collaboration, at the levels of research teams and of universities?

Humanities and Social Sciences: How do moves towards more challenge-based, interdisciplinary research affect the humanities and social sciences in particular?

Detailed questions for research:

- On the surface at least, it may appear as if there are some HSS disciplines which do not get brought into interdisciplinary research—is this the case, and if so why?

Publishers: What are the publishing routes for interdisciplinary research, and how do the existing routes for publication impact on researchers’ career prospects?

Detailed questions for research:

- What are the publishing routes for interdisciplinary research, and how do the existing routes for publication impact on researchers’ career prospects? How will the journal market help or hinder this trend? The operation of the journal market will determine the impact this trend will have on a fundamental level. At present, it is perhaps difficult to foresee in some disciplines where the kind of interdisciplinary research that this trend encourages would be published with high impact.

Government: What role does, and should, government have in promoting and supporting interdisciplinary, challenge-led research?