

## Feedback to finalists

<b>Name of Centre:</b>	CIE - Center for Interdisciplinary Education
<b>Name of Institution:</b>	University of Oslo
<p><b>Aim and vision</b></p> <p>CIE's vision is to <i>establish a national and international hub for the research-based integration of interdisciplinary competence in higher education</i>. At the starting point of CIE's work is the intended outcome for students, teachers, administration, leadership and stakeholders to develop interdisciplinary competence and to participate in, facilitate and lead interdisciplinary processes.</p> <p>The vision and aims of the centre are translated into four objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To develop programs, methods, pedagogies and approaches for interdisciplinary education,</li> <li>• To establish a community and culture for interdisciplinary teaching and learning</li> <li>• To disseminate methods and approaches to interdisciplinary education locally, nationally and internationally</li> <li>• To build a research basis for interdisciplinary teaching and learning and measure the impact of activities.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Centre Plan and Organisation</b></p> <p>In line with the four objectives mentioned above, CIE's centre plan envisions four interconnected work packages:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• WP 1 is dedicated to developing approaches and pedagogies for interdisciplinary education. In order to reach a suitable number of students, learning opportunities are created on three different levels: interdisciplinary programs (and modules), interdisciplinary courses and interdisciplinary sessions. Several clear targets and outcomes are attached to this.</li> <li>• WP 2 is about building a culture for interdisciplinary teaching and learning. Less precise than WP 1, this WP intends to develop ways of motivating and enabling teachers, also with the help of an interdisciplinary facilitator program involving students as learning assistants and student researchers.</li> <li>• WP 3 focuses on dissemination of knowledge and practices, aiming for building a stronger local community, as well as increasing national visibility and international collaboration. Planned activities involve conferences, seminars and courses on various levels, but also the establishment of an honours program within the Circle U university alliance.</li> <li>• WP 4 intends to develop a research-led and research-oriented evaluation and impact framework in order to assess the progress of the centre as well as its impact. Making use of various methods (case studies, rubrics and assessment scales, surveys), the centre also envisions developing a research community which would delve into the various activities and their effectiveness.</li> </ul> <p>The CIE Centre is set up as a collaboration between the Faculties of Humanities, Social Sciences, and Mathematics and Natural Sciences at the University of Oslo (UiO). Students are intended to be key</p>	

partners in all aspects of the centre: in centre leadership, program and course designs, teaching and evaluation.

### **Strengths and weaknesses**

During the assessment of the application and in the course of the site visit, the panel was impressed by a considerable number of strengths and assets, most notably:

- CIE benefits from a leadership team on the institutional level not only in full support of the centre, but heavily invested in it, also with a high level of awareness regarding risks and challenges. This is also mirrored in other key actor groups: There was a general sense of acknowledging the challenges in changing the mindsets not only of students but also of teachers, administrators and leadership across all actors, but also plenty of ideas on how to tackle these challenges.
- CIE is driven by an institution embracing the need to change the key skills and competences graduates need to navigate the complex challenges our societies are facing. The panel found clearly defined plans of how to instill this change and potentially scale the initiative up to a substantial degree, including a smart distinction between session, course and program level within the honors logic.
- The considerable experience UiO has already gathered through various initiatives over previous years is a great basis for further development, which includes the existing honors program as much as available infrastructure (e.g. LINK)
- The panel met dedicated and reflective academic and administrative staff members, who appear intrinsically motivated to allocate time and effort to making interdisciplinary learning and teaching work and showed a keen interest in adding new courses or exploring new themes. In addition to the focus on teaching skills, the university showed considerable awareness that the administrative staff is a key group to involve in the change.
- CIE was also much appreciated by its stakeholders who were emphasizing the potential of the centre and the relevance of being able to think outside of the (disciplinary) box and to collaborate in order to define and solve problems. They were also fully positive about their current relationship with individual academics and/or the institution as a whole. This was mirrored from the perspective of students who were not only enthusiastic about the centre and centre activities but already demonstrating the very openness, reflexivity and interdisciplinary literacy the centre wants to instill.

On the other hand, the panel also identified some key elements still lacking as well as some room for further improvement, most notably:

- The panel would like to see some plans on how the centre is going to avoid creating unintended consequences (e.g. elitism or getting a skewed distribution of disciplinary interest and investment) and how it will navigate potential goal conflicts or even identify them in due time (including a limited focus on those Faculties and disciplines more willing to cooperate).

- Ideas of monitoring success were presented, but it is yet not fully clear how the centre and the institution as a whole will determine its impact on the relevant national and international communities, beyond the question of succeeding in instilling certain competences in students
- The panel did not yet find any discernible relationships with (inter)national institutions specialized in interdisciplinary teaching and learning, encouraging CIE to engage in a systematic exchange with other, potentially more experienced institutions.
- The panel did not find a clear strategy of how the resource issues attached to scaling up will be ultimately resolved, considering that someone needs to decide which courses and topics will actually be tackled, that the teachers currently involved need to invest extra time to make it work, that student facilitators need to be trained and paid and that overhead cost often rise exponentially when scaling up.
- The panel noted a somewhat limited notion of external stakeholders from the centre's point of view, which was in contrast with the university level partnerships. Encouraging and supporting CIE to make effective and systematic use of the university's impressive connections with institutions, partners and communities outside of the university, and bring in external partners as a firm pillar of what the centre does and how it does it, will help the centre to increase its relevance.

Nevertheless, and in the light of strengths and assets listed above, the panel is confident that CIE has a sound basis and a clear enough plan to further develop the already excellent existing initiatives as an SFU, and therefore recommends to fund CIE. In moving forward, the panel also advises CIE to consider the observations on areas of improvement mentioned above and suggests to start with giving further thought to the notion of interdisciplinarity and the question how the pedagogy and didactics linked to interdisciplinary teaching can be extrapolated from the pioneering use cases in order to create a common standard and inform the teaching practices of teachers not directly involved in the centre's work, including on an international level.

**Overall recommendation: Fund**