



Top Ten Tips for evaluating inter- and transdisciplinary research **from SHAPE-ID partners, [Dr Christian Pohl](#) and [Dr Isabel Fletcher](#)**

1

Accept that interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary (ID/TD) evaluation processes may be different from those in other research areas, and include evaluators with different kinds of expertise, including expertise in inter- and transdisciplinary research. This will require combining rigour with flexibility, pragmatism and perhaps patience.

2

Make sure there are a range of quality criteria concerning the goals that should be achieved by inter- and transdisciplinary research (integration of perspectives, comprehensive view, impact beyond science) – these should have been agreed in advance, and in some cases include an indication of how they will differ from the criteria applied to conventional research.

3

Be open minded about other approaches to research, and to other understandings of inter and transdisciplinarity. Be aware of your own inevitable biases – probably acquired from your training and experience – and prepared to discuss disagreements constructively.

4

To avoid opportunistic labelling of research as inter- or transdisciplinary (e.g. in response to a funding call), you need to critically assess the arguments demonstrating that these research questions demand ID/TD approaches and methods.

5

Equally important are considerations of project feasibility and implementation: are/were the proposed methods and processes feasible and can they be/have they been implemented properly? Do the proposed methods and processes indicate the applicants' familiarity with inter- and transdisciplinary research?

6

Evaluate proposals according to how they plan to achieve/have achieved objectives: what resources are allocated; what disciplines are included; are these adequate disciplines to achieve the objectives? Is there a sound and realistic plan on how to work together? Are there methods and tools for integration?

7

Relationships with partners (academic and societal) take a considerable amount of time to develop and good communication is critical: are /were enough resources (finances, time, methods and tools) allocated to developing these relationships?

8

Evaluators need to take into account that – due of the complexity of the problem studied and/or the co-production methods used – ID and TD research can contain more unknowns than other type of research. Evaluation may, therefore, need to focus on the quality of research processes rather than specific outcomes.

9

The outputs of inter- and transdisciplinary research are often more diverse than those of more conventional research and may happen at all moments of exchange between participants. This may require the use of different indicators and metrics to both capture all outputs and assess their quality, again also taking the process into account.

10

Impact should include not just short-term tangible effects (new jobs, additional turnover, product improvements, etc.), but also long-term structural effects which are more linked to ID and TD research practice, such as training, community building, disruptive ideas and social innovation.

Further Resources

🔗 SHAPE-ID toolkit: [Evaluate inter- and transdisciplinary research](#)

About the Authors

Dr Christian Pohl is Co-Director of the Transdisciplinarity Lab of the Department of Environmental Systems Science (TdLab) at ETH Zurich with a habilitation at the University of Bern. He has been studying inter- and transdisciplinary research since the late 1990s and recently developed a toolbox for co-producing knowledge.

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