

Navigating Interdisciplinarity in Academic Promotion: Balancing Innovation with Expertise in Music Studies

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ABSTRACT

This paper analyses the conflicts between interdisciplinary scholarship and conventional disciplinary standards within the promotion and tenure frameworks of music departments. Despite the growing encouragement for interdisciplinary research within universities, evaluation systems frequently maintain a focus on discipline-specific accomplishments, posing challenges for scholars whose work traverses cultural, technological, theoretical, or creative realms. Drawing on published research and institutional policy examples, this paper identifies potential shortcomings in current frameworks for recognising interdisciplinary contributions. It advocates for reforms that encompass more transparent policies, fair evaluation criteria, and varied review committees equipped to evaluate intricate scholarly contributions. Achieving a balance between disciplinary expertise and interdisciplinary innovation is crucial for the progression of music research and for ensuring its relevance in an evolving global context.

Keywords: Academic promotion, core expertise, evaluation criteria, interdisciplinary innovation, music Studies

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INTRODUCTION

Recent research indicates that promotion criteria in modern higher education are experiencing significant changes due to structural and conceptual developments (Dohal, 2023; Helton & Pathman, 2023). Driven by the necessity of tackling societal issues that transcend disciplinary limits, universities now acknowledge diverse scholarly contributions, ranging from interdisciplinary grant initiatives to digital media advancements, aiming to better align academia with global demands (Sun et al., 2021). However, Mäkinen et al. (2025) note that institutions frequently assert a heightened dedication to interdisciplinarity in mission statements and policy documents, although the processes controlling review, promotion, and tenure (RPT) are still fundamentally entrenched in traditional disciplinary norms. Recent research on interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary assessment highlights the challenges evaluators face, including inconsistent definitions, ambiguous quality indicators, and conflicting values regarding research merit and societal relevance (Schaltegger & Vienni-Baptista, 2026).

The resultant structural misalignment may cause faculty to feel uneasy regarding the equilibrium between expectations for new interdisciplinary endeavours and established career standards (Seeber et al., 2022; Daniel et al., 2022). Mäkinen et al. (2025) elucidate these tensions by demonstrating how departments function as "guardians of the disciplinary order," prioritising specialised research outputs despite high-level rhetoric promoting "boundary-crossing" projects. Their research indicates that institutions may provide funding and establish multidisciplinary centres; nonetheless, early-career researchers continue to face pressure to exhibit excellence based on discipline-specific criteria, including high-impact papers and specialised citations.

Gatekeeping by senior faculty, together with the discursive validation of conventional methodologies, can marginalise faculty who employ methods or subjects that do not conform to a singular discipline. Some sectors, especially specific STEM domains, may more readily incorporate interdisciplinary work due to ample funding for collaboration and acknowledged multiauthor contributions, but many social sciences and humanities disciplines are slower to adapt (Mäkinen et al., 2025). Thus, "interdisciplinarity" seems to be theoretically endorsed but only weakly implemented in practice. The promotion process significantly influences a scholar's professional identity and recognition (Hill et al., 2025; Gore-Felton, 2020). Roberts (2020) depicts promotion as a bifurcated progression, commencing with local recognition and culminating in national or even international appreciation of one's influence. Mahat and Tatebe (2019) provide a pragmatic evaluation, emphasising that career progression yields concrete advantages, including greater research autonomy and augmented influence on departmental priorities.

However, the trajectory to advancement is seldom uncomplicated. Sadiq et al. (2019) caution that promotion methods may reinforce or intensify injustices by privileging individuals whose profiles conform to prevailing success measures. Schimanski and Alperin (2018) similarly observe that the disparate RPT practices among institutions underscore an increasing demand for reforms that align with the many methods researchers utilise to generate and disseminate information. Music departments exemplify these overarching dynamics. Historically, they have prioritised demonstrable expertise in specific subfields—music theory, composition, ethnomusicology, music education, music therapy or musicology—believing that thorough, discipline-specific investigation ensures rigour and quality.

Critics contest this limitation. Vladova et al. (2024) and Dolan et al. (2018) contend that seemingly “neutral” promotion frameworks conceal biases that favour single-disciplinary specialisation, a viewpoint supported by Minniti et al. (2009), who demonstrate how inflexible benchmarks might marginalise “hybrid” scholars whose research encompasses numerous fields. Sidek et al. (2012) assert that this difficulty is not solely theoretical; in the Malaysian context, substantial data indicate that researchers who focus their output in a singular domain experience more defined and conventional trajectories for progress. Dixon (2009) similarly emphasises the importance of high-impact publications concentrated on a certain topic area, a strategy that effectively conveys “excellence” to conventional committees but may neglect new interdisciplinary study.

Music as a discipline is intrinsically multidisciplinary, connecting with cultural studies, digital humanities, psychology, sociology, and other fields. Baroni (2021) elucidates the expansion of musicology in the 20th century by the integration of knowledge from physics, anatomy, languages, biology, and the examination of animal auditory perception. Barroso (2015) similarly advocates for teaching methods that incorporate contemporary technology advancements with traditional pedagogical strategies, demonstrating how an integrated approach can enhance students' comprehension of music. Recent JISE research on cross-art piano tuition also demonstrates that interdisciplinary music pedagogy can combine narrative, movement, music creation, and visual art to reshape learner attitudes and strengthen music-learning outcomes (Wu et al., 2025). These discussions reflect the appeals made by Zhang et al. (2023) and Buchberger (2024) to promote creativity, tackle intricate research enquiries, and enhance music scholarship by situating it within wider social and technological contexts. Nevertheless, numerous promotion committees continue to hesitate to grant substantial recognition to interdisciplinary efforts, thus diminishing their transformational potential. Music scholars are progressively incorporating methodologies from cultural studies, psychology, sociology, digital media, and various other disciplines (Baroni, 2021; Zhang et al., 2023). Promotion and tenure

systems may continue to favour traditional disciplinary outputs at the expense of interdisciplinary contributions (Abeles & Doyle, 2018; Mäkinen et al., 2025).

Mäkinen et al. (2025) observe that change in academic departments has not kept pace with institutional declarations, rendering several interdisciplinary music researchers susceptible to a deficiency of acknowledgement for achievements that do not conform to a singular subfield. Although some progressive departments are starting to modify their promotion criteria, achievements are still inconsistent at best. This paper advocates for a more egalitarian and comprehensive approach to academic advancement, acknowledging that interdisciplinarity should not compromise disciplinary rigour. Music scholars aiming to utilise cross-disciplinary approaches must nonetheless exhibit significant contributions to an established discipline, or their work may seem disorganised or deficient in methodological rigour. Narrowly defined rules can inhibit the integrated scholarship that promotes innovation and relevance.

As music progresses in the context of globalisation, technological advancements, and cultural transformations, integrating both existing traditions and innovative interdisciplinarity presents a promising trajectory. This study aims to elucidate how the academic community might reconcile disciplinary depth with cross-sector collaboration by contextualising music-specific difficulties within overarching trends in higher education. This shifts the topic beyond music, reflecting a fundamental concern prevalent across other disciplines: How can universities recognise creative and influential scholarship while maintaining the rigour that disciplines strive to uphold? Ultimately, as this introduction emphasises, establishing a balanced yet progressive model for promotion is essential not only for music departments but also for those who contend that academia flourishes when knowledge circulates freely across its various boundaries.

Discussions regarding tenure and promotion (T&P) have increasingly focused on how institutions might reconcile the demand for interdisciplinarity with the conventional requirements for academic specialisation (Mäkinen & McFarland, 2022; Laitsch et al., 2022). Ski-Berg & Røyseng (2024) demonstrate that despite higher education institutions declaring interdisciplinarity in their mission statements, music faculty face structural and cultural barriers that hinder cross-disciplinary research and innovation. The research shows that institutional legitimacy constraints push universities towards multidisciplinary projects, yet faculty often view these as top-down impositions without institutional support.

The following discussion elaborates on these assertions by examining institutional policy documents, anecdotal tenure experiences, and empirical findings pertinent to music, emphasising that demands for reform are grounded not only in theoretical discourse but also in trends identified across many academic settings.

Examining Institutional Diversity and Policy Discrepancies

Studies on promotion and tenure reveal significant differences across institutions. Hannon and Bergey (2024) identified notable disparities in external-review processes among research-intensive universities in the United States. Abeles and Doyle's (2018) survey of College Music Society members indicates that the emphasis on teaching, scholarship and creative activity, service, collaboration, and interdisciplinary work varies across institutions. Their findings suggest that interdisciplinary teaching and scholarship are frequently regarded as less valuable than conventional forms of scholarly and creative endeavours. Certain institutions recognise "creative partnerships" and "multigenre explorations" as valid scholarly contributions, especially in relation to emergent media (Runco & Lee, 2023; Am & Cherry, 2011). Many policy statements, however, emphasise exclusive disciplinary outcomes. Mercer (2022) examines the dependence on impact variables and the constraints of alternative scholarship, indicating that sector-specific papers prevail in the realm of academic "excellence." Despite criticisms of the peer review process, universities maintain a focus on peer-reviewed articles and monographs as essential indicators of achievement (Roberts & Shambrook, 2012), underscoring the tensions between promoting interdisciplinary scholarship and established promotion frameworks.

Review Challenges for Interdisciplinary Scholarship

Interdisciplinary scholarship poses challenges in promotion and tenure evaluations, as reviewers often apply criteria established within a singular discipline to work that encompasses multiple fields. Interdisciplinary collaboration frequently entails variations in methodological assumptions, disciplinary expectations, and evaluation criteria, complicating assessment processes (Hult et al., 2020). These challenges may be exacerbated when institutions publicly advocate for interdisciplinary engagement while upholding review processes that still prioritise traditional disciplinary outputs. Research on organisational governance indicates that informal practices and institutional cultures can profoundly affect decision-making, often resulting in outcomes that diverge from formal policies and articulated objectives (Mamychev et al., 2018; Van Tatenhove et al., 2006). Consequently, tensions may emerge between institutional commitments to interdisciplinarity and the practical realities of promotion and tenure evaluations.

Empirical Indicators of Interdisciplinary Tensions in Music

Researchers have identified institutional pressures that influence the careers of music faculty. Cha and Amrein-Beardsley (2024) identified a correlation between academic autonomy, collegial support, and clarity regarding the tenure

process with the job satisfaction and stress levels of music education faculty members. Macarthur et al. (2024) identify structural and neoliberal pressures impacting work within higher music education. These findings suggest a challenging professional environment; however, they do not directly demonstrate that faculty forsake interdisciplinary research in favour of traditional work. Vellamo et al. (2019) show that introducing interdisciplinary faculty structures can generate resistance and uncertainty when stakeholders fear that disciplinary identity, visibility, and established responsibilities may be weakened. Their findings illustrate the difficulty of reconciling institutional ambitions for interdisciplinarity with established disciplinary structures.

What is the Current Urgency?

Questions inevitably emerge: if music has consistently encompassed various methodologies, whether analytical, performative, or cultural, why does the impetus for reform appear more urgent today? The answer lies partly in the changing forms of music scholarship itself. Advancements in music technology and artificial intelligence are broadening the methods through which music scholars teach, compose, assess performance, and create new forms of artistic knowledge. In music education, intelligent systems are increasingly being used for personalised feedback, composition assistance, performance evaluation, and adaptive learning, while also raising concerns about bias, cultural sensitivity, and ethical transparency (Mazlan et al., 2026). These developments strengthen the case for reassessing rigid promotion criteria that rely on narrow or “check-box” measures of scholarly value. Institutions that maintain restrictive definitions of excellence may fail to recognise research that connects music with media studies, neuroscience, anthropology, education, digital culture, and other related fields.

Harmonising the “Interdisciplinary Essence” of Music with Departmental Constraints

A final tension emerges in characterising music as both fundamentally interdisciplinary and simultaneously restricted by conservative departmental cultures. Histories of ethnomusicology, composition, and performance studies affirm music's enduring dependence on knowledge from other fields, including physics (for acoustics) and sociolinguistics (to interpret folk traditions). Throughout time, professional communities emerged around specific sub-disciplines, each characterised by its own journals, conferences, and prestige hierarchies. Consequently, T&P committees may favour "depth in one recognised topic," although openly praising the merits of interdisciplinary collaboration. This contradiction endures due to habitual behaviour, institutional inertia in academic gatekeeping, and authentic doubt regarding the assessment of brilliance in emerging or interdisciplinary studies.

In conclusion, these diverse forms of evidence—from public tenure guidelines to documented faculty experiences and emerging empirical surveys—demonstrate that the calls for reforming promotion criteria in music are neither conjectural nor trivial. While instances of progressive departments are present, the predominant trend continues to be one of hesitant and inconsistent implementation of interdisciplinary measures. The subsequent logical progression entails unambiguous policy language that requires acknowledgement of multi-field scholarships, enhanced committee training to assess unconventional outputs, and transparent documentation of successful tenure and promotion cases that integrate cross-disciplinary efforts. Such transformations would not only synchronise institutional objectives with daily academic practices but also guarantee that the dynamic realm of music research, along with its various intersections and influences, can thrive without the threat of professional repercussions.

PROPOSING A BALANCED APPROACH TO ACADEMIC ASSESSMENT

Assessors are required to employ various frameworks for the evaluation of interdisciplinary music research. As scholarship increasingly transcends traditional disciplinary boundaries, tenure and promotion systems must effectively recognise contributions that integrate diverse fields of knowledge. Music scholars often integrate technology, cognitive science, cultural studies, education, and performance studies to tackle intricate research enquiries that require a multidisciplinary approach for comprehensive analysis. Klein and Newell (1996) characterise interdisciplinarity as the amalgamation of viewpoints and methodologies from various disciplines to tackle problems that surpass the limitations of a single field. Recent studies emphasise the significance of interdisciplinary communication and collaboration in enhancing knowledge production and fostering innovation (Nordberg et al., 2024).

Music scholars work with psychology and digital media; thus, assessment methods must reflect this diversity and evolve beyond obsolete standards. Institutions evaluate transdisciplinary scholarship differently. Interdisciplinary research centres and cooperative frameworks are available at certain universities, whereas others urge staff to handle these issues alone. Departmental tenure criteria may conflict with combined appointment faculty. To ensure thorough assessments, some institutions have formed ad hoc evaluation panels with representation from many professions.

Music technology academics may need to justify software inventions vs peer-reviewed publications. Academics in music technology may be required to substantiate software innovations, AI-enhanced creative instruments, or digital educational frameworks in conjunction with peer-reviewed literature. Recent research published in JISE regarding generative AI competence in higher

education indicates that digital competence, formal learning, autonomy, and engagement have become central academic concerns rather than being viewed as peripheral technological issues (Sampah et al., 2026). Traditional tenure reviews may overlook a composer who combines music therapy and cognitive sciences. These differences demonstrate the necessity for institutional flexibility to keep scholarship adaptive.

Tenure and promotion committees must use new assessment methods that capture the essence of interdisciplinary collaboration while keeping academic rigour to evaluate multidisciplinary researchers fairly. Multidisciplinary study often yields recordings, interactive installations, and software tools, which should be evaluated alongside traditional outputs for rigour, peer validation, and impact by music departments. For instance, a music composition machine-learning algorithm should be evaluated for its technological advances and artistic value. This strategy recognises research brilliance regardless of format, safeguarding scientists from academic standard deviations.

Interdisciplinary scholars should not have to meet discipline-specific progression criteria. Assessment should emphasise their intellectual influence and cohesion. Committees must analyse how their work advances many fields in ways unreachable inside a single discipline, reevaluating academic impact criteria to enable multidisciplinary contributions.

Interdisciplinary cases must be examined by multidisciplinary specialists for fairness. Cross-departmental tenure committees can reduce disciplinary bias by involving specialists from similar fields in reviews. External reviewers should also be chosen for their diverse research competence to ensure that scholars' work is evaluated on both artistic and scientific grounds, avoiding incomplete or biased judgments.

A vital measure in guaranteeing equitable evaluation is equipping scholars with the ability to distinctly express the interdisciplinary aspects of their research. This encompasses:

- i. Researchers should be urged to provide comprehensive personal statements that elucidate the interdisciplinary nature of their research.
- ii. Revising tenure guidelines to incorporate specific parts for interdisciplinary contributions.
- iii. Committee reports specifically address how interdisciplinary activity fulfils institutional criteria.

Such safeguards prevent multidisciplinary scholars from assuming a defensive stance, necessitating constant justification of the validity of their work under tenure review frameworks. Interdisciplinary contributions should be formally acknowledged within the institutional structure.

Interdisciplinary professors ought to obtain systematic mentorship and institutional support throughout their careers. Universities may adopt:

- i. Mentorship programs that connect junior faculty with interdisciplinary researchers to provide advice on career progression.
- ii. Administrative coordination to alleviate the service obligations of interdisciplinary academics across many departments.
- iii. Targeted financial resources for multidisciplinary initiatives, enabling faculty to engage in research without the extra obligation of substantiating its worth within certain disciplines.

When institutions actively endorse interdisciplinary scholarship, professors are motivated to engage in new endeavours rather than succumbing to conventional disciplinary standards.

Given that multidisciplinary research is continuously advancing, tenure and promotion procedures must be routinely assessed and revised. Institutions must implement regular evaluations—every three to five years—to guarantee that assessment standards stay congruent with evolving disciplines and research approaches.

Music technology and digital composition were not fully integrated into tenure regulations decades ago, but they are now important study fields. Tenure standards should reflect sound studies and AI-driven composition to avoid disadvantages for researchers. Universities can use best practices and benchmarks against peers to establish adaptive evaluation systems that recognise multidisciplinary innovation. A progressive tenure system allows future music researchers to innovate without outdated standards.

CASE STUDIES AND ILLUSTRATION

The following published works demonstrate the integration of interdisciplinary approaches with the primary field of music of a scholar. They are illustrations of intellectual integration, not documented promotion outcomes.

1. In "On African Music," Agawu (2023) demonstrates a thoughtful integration of music theory and ethnomusicology, highlighting an interdisciplinary method that encompasses cultural studies, philosophy, and postcolonial theory. The book explores the impact of "minimalist impulses" on African music while critically examining the differences between "Western minimalism" and "African minimalism." This examination delves into essential concepts of music theory, including form, repetition, and rhythm, positing that African musical traditions have

the potential to rejuvenate music theory through the introduction of innovative theoretical perspectives. The book provides an in-depth examination of the cultural, social, and political dimensions of African music, critiquing European tonality as a "colonising force" and utilising "ethnotheory" to assess music through indigenous frameworks. The investigation into African rhythm and its cultural importance highlights the ethnomusicological perspective, demonstrating the ways in which researchers interact with African music. The book also explores wider themes, such as academic politics and the global representation of African music, questioning the marginalisation of African art music and promoting a more inclusive global dialogue. Agawu's work explores the theoretical and cultural dimensions of African music, engaging a wide audience that is keen on music analysis, cultural contexts, and the significant implications of studying and representing African music on a global scale.

2. Willie Anku's (2000) paper, "*Circles and Time: A Theory of Structural Organisation of Rhythm in African Music*," effectively reconciles music theory with ethnomusicology, providing an extensive framework for comprehending African rhythms. Anku's work is fundamentally based on the concept of "circular time," which serves as a theoretical framework for examining rhythmic patterns via set theory principles, notably the "12-time point set" and "16-time point set." Anku quantifies rhythms and analyses their mathematical structure, drawing analogies to Western music theory and establishing the systematic analysability of African rhythms. From an ethnomusicological perspective, Anku situates these rhythms within cultural and social contexts, examining their importance in the drumming traditions of the Ewe, Yoruba, and Bemba communities and highlighting the distinct interpretations of identical rhythmic patterns by other ethnic groups. His work integrates principles from cultural studies and anthropology, emphasising how music both reflects and shapes societal structures and identities. Furthermore, Anku integrates philosophical concepts concerning the cyclical essence of time inside African music, connecting theoretical examination with wider cultural and philosophical viewpoints. Anku's interdisciplinary approach renders the study significant for both music theorists and ethnomusicologists, augmenting the comprehension of the cultural and social components of African music.
3. The article "*Re-thinking Inclusivity in Music Learning: The Implications of Multiple Ghanaian Languages in Western-Leaning Music Theory*" by Addaquay (2024) examines the convergence of music theory, education, linguistics, and ethnomusicology. It underscores the incorporation of

many Ghanaian languages into curriculum centred on Western music theory, illustrating how native languages may augment music theory education, especially in comprehending harmonic frameworks and compositional techniques. The research indicates that pupils instructed in Ghanaian languages attained a more profound understanding of both Western and traditional harmonic methodologies. It examines educational theories and practices within multilingual contexts, suggesting that this integration promotes inclusiveness and involvement in music education. Furthermore, it tackles linguistic obstacles, such as the absence of standardised music theory terminology in Ghanaian languages, and proposes the creation of a cohesive lexicon to enhance communication in music education. The research employs an interdisciplinary approach by contrasting Ghana's circumstances with those of other multilingual contexts. Moreover, the study situates music education within Ghana's cultural paradigms, pushing for the incorporation of local languages and practices to enhance cultural significance. Adda Quay's work integrates music theory and ethnomusicology, offering a comprehensive framework for inclusive and culturally responsive music education that resonates with a varied audience of scholars and educators.

4. Levitin and Tirovolas (2009)'s "Current Advances in the Cognitive Neuroscience of Music" covers music perception and cognition brain systems. Cognitive neuroscience, psychology, and music theory are combined with neuroimaging methods, including fMRI, PET, ERP, and MEG, to study how the brain processes music. The study examines brain areas and networks involved in musical perception, memory, performance, and emotion. Key cognitive systems, including pitch, rhythm, and harmony, are examined to show how both hemispheres of the brain process them. The research also combines music theory by examining music's structural components and neurological processing, demonstrating a convergence with music theory. The paper uses psychological theories to analyse perceptual grouping and cognitive processes in music. The authors examine music's evolutionary psychology and language processing, finding shared brain pathways. Levitin and Tirovolas effectively combine disciplines to improve our understanding of music perception and cognition, making their work important for cognitive neuroscience and musicology academics.

The anonymised tenure cases that follow are drawn from my practical experience and direct academic observations, with identifying details modified for confidentiality. The scenarios were chosen from my extensive experience with multidisciplinary faculty assessments to emphasise prevalent obstacles and results.

I documented and analysed each case through reflective observation and examination of relevant committee reports and decision letters. The analysis examined the impact of the candidate's interdisciplinary work on review milestones, including external evaluations, committee deliberations, and final decisions. I contextualised each individual narrative within broader trends by incorporating insights from the literature on interdisciplinary tenure reviews, thereby connecting personal observations with established patterns and recommendations in the field (Klein et al., 2016). This approach connects the anonymised cases with established scholarship and recommendations concerning interdisciplinary promotion procedures.

A faculty member holding a dual appointment in Environmental Science and Public Policy managed two distinct sets of expectations throughout her tenure evaluation. The candidate's research encompassed ecology and sociology, leading to publications in multidisciplinary journals and presentations at conferences for diverse academic audiences. During her mid-term evaluation, she garnered commendation from an interdisciplinary research centre; nonetheless, certain members of the departmental committee expressed uncertainty regarding the assessment of work that did not conform to their singular disciplinary criteria. I witnessed committee discussions in which conventional scholars scrutinised the adequacy of the candidate's publication venues, questioning their "high impact" status due to their deviation from the standard premier journals of the respective discipline. This pause demonstrated how evaluation procedures dominated by discipline might inadequately recognise multidisciplinary work, frequently resulting in ambiguous indications regarding a candidate's advancement.

The department chair (or head of department), recognising the candidate's distinctive profile, invited an external senior professor with interdisciplinary skills to contribute to the discussion. With this additional perspective, the committee acknowledged the candidate's robust record.

The candidate successfully gained tenure, but only after the committee expanded their perspective on scholarly contribution beyond conventional metrics. The example highlighted the necessity of assessors who comprehend both areas of an interdisciplinary scholar's work and illustrated that explicit communication regarding evaluation criteria is essential from the outset of a joint appointment. I observed that without proactive measures to elucidate multidisciplinary accomplishments, even a highly competent individual could be underestimated in a traditional evaluation procedure.

Additionally, a tenure-track faculty member in a conventional department encountered an initial unfavourable tenure decision mostly because of the interdisciplinary character of her research. In this case, the professor's study integrated Computer Science and Digital Humanities, yielding innovative digital archives and analytical tools that diverged from the typical outputs of her department. The promotion and tenure committee of the department, unacquainted

with the evaluation of digital humanities work, utilised their conventional standards and deemed the candidate insufficient—an evaluation the author acknowledged as stemming from mismatched expectations rather than genuine deficiencies in quality.

Several external reviewers, chosen from both computer science and humanities, praised the candidate's innovative contributions and influence across multiple disciplines; however, the internal committee assigned diminished significance to those letters, as the accomplishments did not align with their predetermined criteria for impact. The author noted the tension this caused: the candidate was effectively trapped between adhering to conventional standards and seeking authentic interdisciplinary innovation.

The matter progressed to the collegiate appeals committee. At that level, administrators and teachers possessing interdisciplinary experience evaluated the dossier. With a comprehensive viewpoint established, the ruling was rescinded, and tenure was conferred. The senior committee openly recognised that the evaluation framework inadequately considered the candidate's interdisciplinary contributions, and they underscored the necessity for more explicit rules for similar instances in the future.

This case demonstrated that an absence of preliminary consensus on evaluation standards can endanger an interdisciplinary scholar's career and underscored the importance of engaging evaluators who can recognise nontraditional academic trajectories. The author's participation in the appeals process demonstrated that institutional mechanisms, such as college-wide committees or external experts, can rectify departmental biases; however, it also indicated that depending on such remedial actions post hoc is precarious—proactive measures should be established to ensure alignment of expectations from the outset.

Interdisciplinary professors may encounter contradictory evaluations regarding their job. Universities theoretically advocate for interdisciplinary collaboration, although tenure assessments may still be dictated by discipline-specific criteria. Research has highlighted a disparity between theoretical support and practical implementation, with one study citing conventional tenure processes as a significant barrier to interdisciplinary scholarship. These instances exemplified the misalignment: candidates were originally evaluated using criteria not tailored to their roles, resulting in confusion and additional obstacles (Klein et al., 2016). Traditional tenure systems may offer restricted motivation for interdisciplinary collaboration (Klein et al., 2016). The tenure policy of the University of Minnesota School of Music explicitly allows for scholarly and creative work that incorporates related disciplines, including history, literary criticism, anthropology, mathematics, and psychology (University of Minnesota, School of Music, 2016).

Formulating explicit evaluation agreements (such as a memorandum of understanding when recruiting or defined criteria for joint appointments) and engaging reviewers proficient in multidisciplinary work are essential for equitable assessment. In all instances, the presence of an individual capable of bridging disciplines, whether an external reviewer or a committee member with multidisciplinary expertise, was crucial in appropriately acknowledging the candidates' contributions.

A burgeoning trend inside academia seeks to tackle these evaluation difficulties at a systematic level. Professional organisations and task groups have begun to issue rules specifically designed for interdisciplinary study, emphasising that tenure committees should recognise, rather than penalise, work that crosses academic boundaries. For instance, Texas Tech University's Talkington College of Visual & Performing Arts features interdisciplinary arts faculty practices. A collaborative faculty committee from relevant subjects evaluates the candidate, ensuring a wide perspective on their work (Texas Tech University, 2021). In a similar vein, Duke University's faculty handbook states that while forming the review committee, it should be considered whether a tenure candidate's work is multidisciplinary, suggesting that the committee's makeup may be modified for interdisciplinary instances (Duke University, 2018).

These guidelines, in conjunction with campus policies such as college-level oversight committees and joint appointment agreements, constitute a comprehensive initiative to modify promotion processes in response to the contemporary collaborative and interdisciplinary research environment. The real-world situations illustrated herein demonstrate the necessity of these reforms: they reveal both the shortcomings of the current system and the beneficial results achievable when evaluation systems adapt to adequately recognise interdisciplinary contributions.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To promote a more inclusive and equitable approach to multidisciplinary research in music, scholars and institutions must implement techniques that guarantee that the research is recognised and conveyed successfully. The subsequent guidelines offer pragmatic counsel for researchers to sustain the pertinence of their multidisciplinary endeavors to their primary field of expertise and propose methods for institutions to enhance the assessment and support of such contributions.

For Scholars

Music scholars should endeavour to uphold a robust basis in their respective fields while investigating interdisciplinary subjects. In technology-oriented music scholarship, it is imperative that this disciplinary foundation

encompasses AI literacy. Music educators require a theoretical framework, practical skills, and ethical discernment for the effective integration of AI into their teaching, research, and creative endeavors (Yoo, 2026). A music theorist aiming to incorporate cognitive neuroscience into their research must ensure that their work contributes to significant discussions and progress in music theory, utilising insights from cognitive studies to enhance comprehension of harmonic perception, rhythm processing, or tonal memory. This methodology guarantees that multidisciplinary research remains closely aligned with its foundations in music theory, preserving its significance and influence within the primary discipline.

Scholars must delineate specific aims within their primary area that they can gain from interdisciplinary perspectives. A composer integrating digital media studies should concentrate on how these tools augment or contest traditional compositional techniques, therefore maintaining a primary emphasis on music creation.

Researchers must elucidate the significance of interdisciplinary components to their principal discipline in all scholarly works. When disseminating or showcasing work that incorporates other disciplines, it is imperative to elucidate how these interdisciplinary methodologies enhance music study. For instance, when an ethnomusicologist incorporates social anthropology into their examination of music and migration, they ought to highlight how this expands our comprehension of music as a cultural manifestation and enhances musicological analysis.

Moreover, contextualising multidisciplinary efforts within the overarching objectives of the discipline might enhance their perceived significance. A scientist integrating music education with cognitive psychology could position their study to enhance music teaching methodologies, illustrating how cognitive insights might guide pedagogical strategies.

Scholars should aim to publish in journals that recognise both disciplinary depth and interdisciplinary innovation. Selecting the right journals is crucial for ensuring that interdisciplinary work is reviewed by those who understand both its musicological content and its interdisciplinary scope. For instance, journals such as *Music Perception*, which publishes theory-driven, basic and applied science, empirical reports, theoretical papers, and reviews, or the *Ethnomusicology Forum*, which incorporates cultural studies, can be excellent venues.

Furthermore, scholars could consider publishing in interdisciplinary journals outside their primary field that have a track record of publishing music-related research, such as journals in psychology, neuroscience, cultural studies, or digital humanities. This strategy ensures that their work reaches a diverse audience while still maintaining relevance to their core discipline.

For Institutions and Assessors

Institutions ought to amend their promotion criteria to clearly incorporate factors for transdisciplinary contributions. Promotion rules may be revised to acknowledge the significance of interdisciplinary integration, especially in domains such as music, where this amalgamation can yield innovative research and novel insights. Institutions may contemplate incorporating criteria that prioritise publications across many disciplines, engagement in interdisciplinary conferences, and collaboration with researchers from diverse domains.

Criteria may encompass the acknowledgement of innovative outputs or research that transcends conventional limits, such as compositions influenced by digital technology, music education research that incorporates cognitive psychology, or music theory investigations that intersect with cultural anthropology.

Institutions ought to offer training for promotion evaluators to impartially examine transdisciplinary endeavours. This training could enhance assessors' comprehension of the methodology, frameworks, and contributions of interdisciplinary research, ensuring that such work is not underestimated due to unfamiliarity or bias. For example, evaluators at a music department may receive training to appraise research that integrates music theory with cognitive neuroscience or cultural studies, including methods to evaluate its significance and applicability within and outside the realm of music.

Training may also emphasise the evaluation of outcomes that deviate from conventional disciplinary standards yet contribute meaningfully to knowledge advancement. This would facilitate a more inclusive assessment procedure that equitably recognises varied academic achievements.

Institutions ought to provide support frameworks to promote multidisciplinary research in music. These may encompass the establishment of interdisciplinary research centres dedicated to the integration of music with other domains, such as a centre for music and neurology or a centre for music and digital culture. These centres would facilitate collaboration, resource access, and possibilities for interdisciplinary conversation.

Furthermore, institutions could provide grants or funds explicitly aimed at facilitating multidisciplinary study in music. Grants may be granted for initiatives investigating the convergence of music with technology, cognitive science, or cultural studies, offering financial assistance and acknowledgement for pioneering academic endeavours.

By implementing these ideas, scholars and institutions can more effectively traverse the intricacies of multidisciplinary study in music. Researchers can sustain the significance of their interdisciplinary endeavours by maintaining a robust central focus, precisely articulating their study, and judiciously disseminating their findings in suitable platforms. Institutions can

cultivate a more inclusive and supportive climate by amending promotion criteria, training evaluators, and establishing specialised support systems.

Collectively, these tactics will facilitate the equitable valuation and acknowledgement of multidisciplinary study, propelling the discipline of music forward in innovative and significant manners.

CONCLUSION

This conclusion shows how institutional mandates and disciplinary norms conflict in music promotion and tenure (P&T) processes. Universities value multidisciplinary problem solving, but standard evaluation procedures can unfairly evaluate early-career scholars. This dilemma is not unique to music but echoes academic issues where departments have rigid standards and are reluctant to recognise new ideas. Some organisations are setting clear multidisciplinary evaluation standards and involving cross-departmental members in P&T reviews, which are promising reforms. These reforms balance disciplinary depth with innovative cooperation to promote music scholarship. Modernising evaluation frameworks to appreciate compositions and collaborative works requires policy consistency and structural support that aligns with contemporary research methodologies. The future of music research depends on recognising interdisciplinarity as a commitment to complex questions. Academia may improve contributions across domains and disciplines by altering evaluation systems and assessment processes to honour tradition and stimulate innovation.

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