

Six Disciplines, One Open Question

How can different ways of studying consciousness ask a shared question without treating their evidence as interchangeable?

OPEN QUESTION: What observation would connect a proposed mechanism to conscious experience, and distinguish it from a credible alternative?

One question, several targets

Consciousness can refer to being awake, having a particular experience, being able to report it, or having a sense of self. Begin by asking which target a speaker means. A finding about attention or responsiveness does not automatically settle a claim about subjective experience.

The six disciplines below are AkashicNET editorial groupings, not official conference tracks or an exhaustive classification. Their overlap is useful, but overlap does not mean equal evidential support. Programme connections use the official listing [S1]; all questions are our own.

1. Neuroscience And Neuroengineering

Target: neural processes associated with conscious state or content. Listen for measurements, perturbations and the distinction between perception, attention, memory and report. A predictive brain signature may still be a prerequisite or consequence rather than the experience-producing process.

Ask: Can you change the proposed process while holding task demands and report requirements as constant as possible? What rival account predicts a different outcome?

2. Cellular Biology And Biophysics

Target: how cytoskeleton, metabolism, membranes and cellular organisation constrain neural function. Necessary biological support is not automatically a consciousness-specific mechanism. Compare molecular effects with changes in excitability, transport and general cell health.

Ask: Which cellular change should precede a defined change in conscious state, and how would you exclude ordinary physiological explanations?

3. Quantum Physics And Quantum Biology

Target: a specified quantum property, its persistence, and a proposed causal contribution. Orch OR includes claims beyond the ordinary quantum chemistry of living matter. Demonstrating an optical or molecular phenomenon does not by itself demonstrate objective reduction or conscious moments.

Ask: What measurement would distinguish your specifically quantum mechanism from a quantitatively specified classical model?

Experience, Models And Boundaries

4. Psychology, Contemplation And Phenomenology

Target: the structure and variation of experience. First-person reports can characterise experience and guide experiments; training, language, expectations and interview methods can affect what is reported. A profound sense of unity is an experience to understand, not by itself proof of a universal mind.

Ask: How are experience categories defined, and can another team recover them with blinded coding and an independent sample?

5. Philosophy Of Mind

Target: conceptual clarity and competing accounts of what consciousness is. Physicalism, panpsychism, cosmopsychism and idealism make different commitments. Philosophical coherence and empirical confirmation are distinct achievements. Some versions may currently be observationally indistinguishable.

Ask: Where do the competing positions predict different observations? If they do not, what conceptual problem is the argument intended to solve?

6. Computational Science And AI

Target: models of cognition, information processing and possible indicators of machine consciousness. Successful behaviour can constrain explanations, but a model that reproduces reports does not thereby establish subjective experience. Separate functional capacity from the criteria used to infer experience.

Ask: Which indicator would survive changes in prompting, training and imitation, and why should it track experience rather than performance?

Where Psi And Altered States Fit

Psi claims cut across psychology, physics and philosophy; psychedelics and meditation cut across physiology and first-person research. They are cross-cutting research questions, not extra steps in a ladder toward cosmic consciousness. Test alleged information transfer separately from reports of connection, and test treatment outcomes separately from metaphysical interpretations.

Programme Connections

Examples to explore: Boyden and Brandmeyer for neuroscience; Ori-McKenney and Patel for cellular questions; Tuszynski and Craddock for quantum proposals; Lucille and Zeidan for contemplation; Hoffman and Schooler for conceptual models; Schneider and Tononi for AI questions [S1]. These are editorial connections, not endorsements or claims that each person accepts this map.

Build A Bridge You Can Test

Three Worked Boundaries

Microtubules: the 2024 rat study reported delayed loss of righting reflex after epothilone B under isoflurane [S3]. This supports investigating a drug-sensitive biological contribution; it does not isolate quantum collapse or directly measure experience. Ask what measurements would separate competing pathways.

Networks: the Cogitate collaboration tested agreed predictions from IIT and GNWT using multiple recording methods [S2]. Results challenged aspects of both. Its value here is prediction-level comparison, not permission to declare every theory equivalent.

Altered states: Siegel and colleagues measured changes in functional brain organisation under psilocybin [S4]. Relating those changes to experience addresses a biological question. It does not establish that an experience reveals an external nonlocal reality.

A Conversation Starter

I am comparing how different disciplines define their explanatory target. What does your approach explain most precisely, and which observation would distinguish it from the strongest alternative?

A Five-Line Note After Each Talk

1. Target: state, content, report, selfhood, or something else?
2. Observation: what was actually measured?
3. Interpretation: what mechanism is proposed?
4. Alternative: what else could produce that result?
5. Next test: what result would change confidence?

AkashicOMNI's Role

Use AkashicOMNI as a comparison and hypothesis-orchestration scaffold [S5]. A multiscale map organises questions; it does not establish a new consciousness mechanism. Influence across scales does not show that every scale constitutes experience. Mechanism, ontology and personal meaning remain distinct. Continue with Field Guide 02 to turn the map into explicit revision criteria.

Read The Originals

Selected anchors, not a systematic review. Source access checked 30 September 2026. The questions and comparison categories are original AkashicNET editorial proposals.

S1 TSC 2026: official programme

https://tsc2026.org/program_details.html

Programme context only; listing is not validation of a claim. Checked 30 September 2026.

S2 Cogitate Consortium et al. (2025). Adversarial testing of GNWT and IIT. *Nature* 642, 133-142.

<https://doi.org/10.1038/s41586-025-08888-1>

Primary experiment. Tests specified predictions about conscious visual content.

S3 Khan et al. (2024). Microtubule-Stabilizer Etoposide B Delays Anesthetic-Induced Unconsciousness in Rats. *eNeuro* 11(8).

<https://doi.org/10.1523/ENEURO.0291-24.2024>

Primary animal experiment; loss of righting reflex is a proxy. Abstract/method summary checked; publisher full text was blocked in this pass.

S4 Siegel et al. (2024). Psilocybin desynchronizes the human brain. *Nature* 632, 131-138.

<https://doi.org/10.1038/s41586-024-07624-5>

Primary human imaging study; brain dynamics and experience, not proof of a metaphysical interpretation.

S5 AkashicOMNI: Is Consciousness Multiscale?

<https://akashicnet.org/akashicomni/multiscale-consciousness>

Independent editorial comparison and further source ledger; not independent scientific evidence.

Independent Conference Companion

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Web Edition And Related Reading

<https://akashicnet.org/tsc2026/field-guides/six-disciplines-one-open-question>

Conversation starters and speaker materials: akashicnet.org/tsc2026/conversations. Use Guide 01 for the disciplinary map and Guide 02 for confidence-change questions.