

A Scholarly Approach to Teaching: A SoTL Definition by Nancy Chick

The scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL) is a synthesis of teaching, learning, and research in post-secondary education that brings a scholarly lens—the curiosity, the inquiry, the rigour, the disciplinary perspectives, and the attention to larger conversations—to what happens when learning happens (or doesn't).

SoTL involves

- asking meaningful questions about student learning, and about the teaching activities designed to facilitate student learning,
- answering those questions by making relevant student learning visible to gather evidence of thinking and learning, and then systematically analyzing this evidence, and
- sharing the results of that analysis publicly to invite peer review, and to contribute to broader bodies of knowledge on student learning , and
- aiming to improve student learning by strengthening the practice of teaching (one's own *and* others').

We say that SoTL brings a scholarly approach because it ***begins with intellectual curiosity, is conducted deliberately and systematically, is grounded in an analysis of relevant evidence, and results in findings shared with peers to be reviewed and to expand a knowledge base.***

SoTL is....

- inquiry to **understand or improve student learning** and the teaching approaches & practices that affect student learning in higher education
 - **informed** by relevant research on teaching and learning
 - conducted by members of educational community from across campus drawing from their **disciplinary expertise**
 - by gathering & analyzing relevant **evidence from the learners** in their own specific **contexts**
 - shared broadly to **contribute** to knowledge & practices in teaching and learning

An Extended Taxonomy of SoTL Questions

“Every scholarly & professional field is defined by the questions it asks.”

--Pat Hutchings, *Opening Lines* (2000)

“what works?”	seek "evidence about the relative effectiveness of different [teaching] approaches"
“what is?”	seek to describe “what it looks like”
“visions of the possible” [“what would happen if?”]	related to goals for teaching & learning that have yet to be met or are new to the faculty member asking the questions
theory-building questions	designed to build theoretical frameworks (“shaping thought about practice”) for SoTL, similar to those in disciplines
	--Pat Hutchings, <i>Opening Lines: Approaches to the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning</i> (2000)
“what works where?”	seek to understand how the effectiveness of teaching and learning interventions is situated within specific contexts
	--Chng Huang Hoon & Peter Looker, “ <i>On the Margins of SoTL Discourse: An Asian Perspective</i> ” (2013)
“what is where?”	seek to understand how the experiences of teaching and learning are situated within specific contexts
	--Nancy Chick, adaptation of Chng & Looker
“what would happen if we asked about these effects?”	seek to delve more deeply into what’s emerging about student learning by exploring metacognitive processes; often a follow-up question to earlier SoTL questions
	--Anthony Ciccone, “ <i>Learning Matters: Asking Meaningful Questions</i> ” (2018)
“how’s it working?”	“capturing the impact of a teaching intervention in mid-flight, as it is occurring, rather than waiting until the end. It is also about the thought process behind the strategy and how it is mapping (or not) onto the evolving learning experiences of the students and the changing conditions at the institution”
“what’s your story?”	“the value of lived experience, not just as anecdote, but as catalysts and, perhaps most importantly, as evidence”
“how do we make sense of ... all of this?”	“help us make sense of ourselves and the varied and variable world around us ... the super complexity, a.k.a. the messiness, a.k.a the wickedness of the challenges facing contemporary higher education”